

THE SCHOOL OF YUSUF

He [Yusuf] said, "My Lord, prison is preferable to me than what they call on me to do. Unless you turn their guile away from me, it may well be that I will fall for them and so become a man of ignorance."

His Lord replied to him and turned away from him their feminine wiles and treachery. He is the One Who Hears, the One Who Knows. Then, after they had seen the Signs, they thought that they should still imprison him for a time.

(Surah Yusuf, 33-35)

HARUN YAHYA

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Now writing under the pen-name of HARUN YAHYA, he was born in Ankara in 1956. Having completed his primary and secondary education in Ankara, he studied arts at Istanbul's Mimar Sinan University and philosophy at Istanbul University. Since the 1980s, he has published many books on political, scientific, and faith-related issues. Harun Yahya is well-known as the author of important works disclosing the imposture of evolutionists, their invalid claims, and the dark liaisons between Darwinism and such bloody ideologies as fascism and communism.

His penname is a composite of the names *Harun* (Aaron) and *Yahya* (John), in memory of the two esteemed Prophets who fought against their people's lack of faith. The Prophet's seal on the his books' covers is symbolic and is linked to the their contents. It represents the Qur'an (the final scripture) and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), last of the prophets. Under the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (teachings of the Prophet), the author makes it his purpose to disprove each fundamental tenet of godless ideologies and to have the "last word," so as to completely silence the objections raised against religion. He uses the seal of the final Prophet, who attained ultimate wisdom and moral perfection, as a sign of his intention to offer the last word.

All of Harun Yahya's works share one single goal: to convey the Qur' an's message, encourage readers to consider basic faith-related issues such as Allah's Existence and Unity and the Hereafter; and to expose godless systems' feeble foundations and perverted ideologies.

Harun Yahya enjoys a wide readership in many countries, from India to America, England to Indonesia, Poland to Bosnia, and Spain to Brazil. Some of his books are available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Urdu, Arabic, Albanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat (Bosnian), Polish, Malay, Uygur Turkish, and Indonesian.

Greatly appreciated all around the world, these works have been instrumental in many people recovering faith in Allah and gaining deeper insights into their faith. His books' wisdom and sincerity, together with a distinct style that's easy to understand, directly affect anyone who reads them. Those who seriously consider these books, can no longer advocate atheism or any other perverted ideology or materialistic philosophy, since these books are characterized by rapid effectiveness, definite results, and irrefutability. Even if they continue to do so, it will be only a sentimental insistence, since these books refute such ideologies from their very foundations. All contemporary movements of denial are now ideologically defeated, thanks to the books written by Harun Yahya.

This is no doubt a result of the Qur'an's wisdom and lucidity. The author modestly intends to serve as a means in humanity's search for Allah's right path. No material gain is sought in the publication of these works.

Those who encourage others to read these books, to open their minds and hearts and guide them to become more devoted servants of Allah, render an invaluable service.

Meanwhile, it would only be a waste of time and energy to propagate other books that create confusion in people's minds, lead them into ideological chaos, and that clearly have no strong and precise effects in removing the doubts in people's hearts, as also verified from previous experience. It is

impossible for books devised to emphasize the author's literary power rather than the noble goal of saving people from loss of faith, to have such a great effect. Those who doubt this can readily see that the sole aim of Harun Yahya's books is to overcome disbelief and to disseminate the Qur'an's moral values. The success and impact of this service are manifested in the readers' conviction.

One point should be kept in mind: The main reason for the continuing cruelty, conflict, and other ordeals endured by the vast majority of people is the ideological prevalence of disbelief. This can be ended only with the ideological defeat of disbelief and by conveying the wonders of creation and Qur'anic morality so that people can live by it. Considering the state of the world today, leading into a downward spiral of violence, corruption and conflict, clearly this service must be provided speedily and effectively, or it may be too late.

In this effort, the books of Harun Yahya assume a leading role. By the will of Allah, these books will be a means through which people in the twentyfirst century will attain the peace, justice, and happiness promised in the Qur'an.

The works of the author include *The New Masonic Order, Judaism and Freemasonry, Global Freemasonry, The Kabbala and Freemasonry, The Knight Templars, Templars and Freemasonry, Israel's Policy of World Domination, Islam Denounces Terrorism, The Black Clan, Terrorism: The Ritual of the Devil, The Disasters Darwinism Brought to Humanity, Communism in Ambush, Fascism: The Bloody Ideology of Darwinism, The 'Secret Hand' in Bosnia, Holocaust Violence, Behind the Scenes of Terrorism, Israel's Kurdish Card, Communist China's Policy of Oppression in East Turkestan, Palestine, Solution: The Values of the Qur'an, The Winter of Islam and The Spring to Come, Islam and Buddhism, The Philosophy of Zionism, Articles 1-2-3, Romanticism: A Weapon of Satan, The Light of the Qur'an Has Destroyed Satanism, Signs From the Chapter of the Cave in the Qur'an to the Last Times, The End Times and the Mahdi, Signs From the Qur'an, Signs of the Last Day, The Last Times and The Beast of the Earth, Truths 1-2, Idealism The Philosophy of Matrix and the True Nature of Matter, The Western World Turns to God, The Evolution Deceit, The Perfect Design in the Universe Is Not by Chance, Why Darwinism Is Incompatible with the Qur'an, Darwinism Refuted, New Research Demolishes Evolution, A Definitive Reply to Evolutionist Propaganda, The Quandary of Evolution I-II (Encyclopedic), The Error of the Evolution of Species, The Blunders of Evolutionists, The Collapse of the Theory of Evolution in 50 Steps, The Errors of The NAS: A Reply to the National Academy of Sciences Booklet Science and Creationism, Confessions of Evolutionists, Perished Nations, For Men of Understanding, Love of Allah, Allah's Art of Affection, The Glad Tidings of the Messiah, The Prophet Musa (as), The Prophet Yusuf (as), The Prophet Muhammad (saas), The Prophet Sulayman (as), The Prophet Ibrahim (as) and the Prophet Lut (as), Maryam (as) The Exemplary Muslim Woman, The Golden Age, Allah Exists, Allah's Artistry in Colour, Magnificence Everywhere, The Importance of the Evidences of Creation, The Truth of the Life of This World, The Nightmare of Disbelief, Knowing the Truth, Eternity Has Already Begun, Timelessness and the Reality of Fate, Matter: Another Name for Illusion, The Little Man in the Tower, Islam and Karma, The Dark Magic of Darwinism, The Religion of Darwinism, The Collapse of the Theory of Evolution in 20 Questions, Allah is Known Through Reason, The Qur'an Leads the Way to Science, Consciousness in the Cell, Biomimetics Technology Imitates Nature, The Engineering in Nature, A String of Miracles, The Creation of the Universe, Miracles of the Qur'an, The Design in Nature, Self-Sacrifice and Intelligent*

Behaviour Models in Animals, Deep Thinking, Never Plead Ignorance, The Green Miracle: Photosynthesis, The Miracle in the Cell, The Miracle in the Eye, The Miracle in the Spider, The Miracle in the Mosquito, The Miracle in the Ant, The Miracle of the Immune System, The Miracle of Creation in Plants, The Miracle in the Atom, The Miracle in the Honeybee, The Miracle of Seed, The Miracle of Hormones, The Miracle of the Termite, The Miracle of the Human Body, The Miracle of Human Creation, The Miracle of Protein, The Miracle of Smell and Taste, The Miracle of the Microworld, The Secrets of DNA, The Miracle in the Molecule, The Miracle of Creation in DNA, The Miracle of Talking Birds.

The author's childrens books are: *Wonders of Allah's Creation, The World of Animals, The Glory in the Heavens, Wonderful Creatures, Let's Learn Our Islam, The World of Our Little Friends: The Ants, Honeybees That Build Perfect Combs, Skillful Dam Constructors: Beavers, Tell Me About Creation, The Miracle in Our Body, A Day in the Life of a Muslim, Children This is for You I-II*

The author's other works on Quranic topics include: *The Basic Concepts in the Qur'an, The Moral Values of the Qur'an, Quick Grasp of Faith 1-2-3, Ever Thought About the Truth?, Crude Understanding of Disbelief, Devoted to Allah, Abandoning the Society of Ignorance, Paradise: The Believers' Real Home, Learning from the Qur'an, An Index to the Qur'an, Emigrating for the Cause of Allah, The Character of the Hypocrite in the Qur'an, The Secrets of the Hypocrite, Names of Allah, Communicating the Message and Disputing in the Qur'an, Answers from the Qur'an, Death Resurrection Hell, The Struggle of the Messengers, The Avowed Enemy of Man: Satan, The Greatest Slander: Idolatry, The Religion of the Ignorant, The Arrogance of Satan, Prayer in the Qur'an, The Theory of Evolution, The Importance of Conscience in the Qur'an, The Day of Resurrection, Never Forget, Commonly Disregarded Qur'anic Rulings, Human Characters in the Society of Ignorance, The Importance of Patience in the Qur'an, Perfected Faith, Before You Regret, Our Messengers Say, The Mercy of Believers, The Fear of Allah, Jesus Will Return, Beauties for Life in the Qur'an, A Bouquet of the Beauties of Allah 1-2-3-4, The Iniquity Called "Mockery," The Mystery of the Test, Real Wisdom Described in the Qur'an, The Struggle Against the Religion of Irreligion, The School of Yusuf, The Alliance of the Good, Slanders Spread Against Muslims Throughout History, The Importance of Following the Good Word, Why Do You Deceive Yourself?, Islam: The Religion of Ease, Zeal and Enthusiasm Described in the Qur'an, Seeing Good in All, How do the Unwise Interpret the Qur'an?, Some Secrets of the Qur'an, The Courage of Believers, Hopefulness in the Qur'an, Justice and Tolerance in the Qur'an, Basic Tenets of Islam, Those Who do not Heed the Qur'an, Taking the Qur'an as a Guide, A Lurking Threat: Heedlessness, Sincerity Described in the Qur'an, The Happiness of Believers, Those Who Exhaust Their Pleasures During Their Wordly Lives, A Sly Game of Satan, Passivism in Religion, The Religion of Worshipping People, Agonies of a Fake World, How a Muslim Speaks, The Silent Language of Evil, The Ruses of the Liar in the Qur'an, Loyalty in the Qur'an, The Solution to Secret Torments.*

TO THE READER

A special chapter is assigned to the collapse of the theory of evolution because this theory constitutes the basis of all anti-spiritual philosophies. Since Darwinism rejects the fact of creation—and therefore, Allah's Existence—over the last 140 years it has caused many people to abandon their faith or fall into doubt. It is therefore an imperative service, a very important duty to show everyone that this theory is a deception. Since some readers may find the chance to read only one of our book, we think it appropriate to devote a chapter to summarize this subject.

All the author's books explain faith-related issues in light of Qur'anic verses, and invite readers to learn Allah's words and to live by them. All the subjects concerning Allah's verses are explained so as to leave no doubt or room for questions in the reader's mind. The books' sincere, plain, and fluent style ensure that everyone of every age and from every social group can easily understand them. Thanks to their effective, lucid narrative, they can be read at a one sitting. Even those who rigorously reject spirituality are influenced by the facts these books document and cannot refute the truthfulness of their contents.

This and all the other books by the author can be read individually, or discussed in a group. Readers eager to profit from the books will find discussion very useful, letting them relate their reflections and experiences to one another.

In addition, it will be a great service to Islam to contribute to the publication and reading of these books, written solely for the pleasure of Allah. The author's books are all extremely convincing. For this reason, to communicate true religion to others, one of the most effective methods is encouraging them to read these books.

We hope the reader will look through the reviews of his other books at the back of this book. His rich source material on faith-related issues is very useful, and a pleasure to read.

In these books, unlike some other books, you will not find the author's personal views, explanations based on dubious sources, styles that are unobservant of the respect and reverence due to sacred subjects, nor hopeless, pessimistic arguments that create doubts in the mind and deviations in the heart.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE SCHOOL OF YUSUF?

“... And he languished in prison for a number of years more.” (Surah Yusuf, 42). According to an exegesis of this verse, Joseph (Peace be upon him) is the patron of prisoners, and prison is a sort of School of Joseph. (*Madrasa-i Yusufiya*)¹

This interpretation was offered by one of the greatest Islamic scholars of the 20th century, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, who devoted much of his life to the teaching of the morality of the Qur'an, and because of that earned the animosity of certain circles. Ultimately, he spent 30 years of his life in prison and exile.

The reason for Bediuzzaman referring to prison as “the school of Yusuf” and our using this phrase as the title of this book is the following for certain sincere Muslims, who call the people to serve Allah alone, and to be of good character, prisons are places they are confined to from time to time, without any wrongdoing on their part. These places of confinement become for them classrooms (*madrasah*) by which they learn self-discipline.

The reason for these schools to be referred to as the School of Yusuf, is that, as the Qur'an reveals, Yusuf (as), known for his faith and good character, spent many years of his life in them, despite his innocence. Yusuf (as) was chastised for teaching Allah's religion. Throughout the period of his confinement, he remained aware that everything that had happened to him was for some ultimate good. Despite this adversity, he continued to teach Islam to fellow prisoners, telling them of the existence of Allah and proper morality. For not having complained at any time during his term, he is a role model for all Muslims.

In addition to Yusuf (as), Imam A'zam, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, and more recently Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan and Mehmet Efendi of Gonen, known to be devout Muslims, all who strove to propagate the morality of the Qur'an, were similarly chastised by those who deny Allah and His religion, failing to appreciate the sincerity of these Muslims.

These courageous men were vilified, wrongly accused through fabricated evidence, and punished with imprisonment. These Islamic leaders, like Yusuf (as) before them, knew hardship to be an opportunity to earn rewards in the Hereafter, and therefore faced them in submission. They regarded the difficulties of prison life as a form of education, as well as an opportunity to retreat. In other words, they recognized themselves to be in the School of Yusuf, rather than prison.

Bediuzzaman spent a great part of his life in the School of Yusuf, and this book therefore contains many excerpts from his published reflections. He states, in his “Fruits of Belief,” written while in the Denizli prison, that he regarded prison as the School of Yusuf. He wrote:

... [A]lthough I could never stand the slightest insult or to be dominated, I swear that the light and strength of belief in the Hereafter afforded me the patience, endurance, solace, and steadfastness; indeed, it filled me with enthusiasm to gain greater reward in the profitable, instructive exertions of this ordeal, for as I said at the beginning of this treatise, **I knew myself to be in a good *madrasah* or school worthy of the title of “*Madrasa-i Yusufiya*”.**²

Sincere believers have been consistently assailed by those who deny the true religion, merely for seeking to live by the morality of the Qur'an, and striving to teach others to do the same. Throughout history, among the methods applied to weaken the believers has been slander, according to fabricated evidence, and false witnesses, in order to make them appear guilty in the eyes of the people and the law, and thus to have them imprisoned.

Believers, who are punished with imprisonment, as a result of such actions, are considered by others, who are deficient in their understanding, to be confined. In reality, however, they have an opportunity to concentrate on their spiritual development, to deepen their insight. Ultimately, it is a chance to come closer to Allah. They can also gain strengths in many further aspects, as one spending time to meditate at a retreat, as did the Companions of the Cave, over the passage of so many years. Therefore, those who seek to harm Muslims, and to inhibit their efforts in the service of the faith, in reality, only end up helping the Muslims in the earning of a great reward.

THERE ARE MANY LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE STORIES OF THE MESSENGERS

Allah transmits important lessons in the accounts of the prophets in the Qur'an, and stated, in Surah Yusuf:

We tell you the best of stories in revealing this Qur'an to you, even though you were unaware of it before it came. (Surah Yusuf, 3)

In another verse, Allah outlined the following, with regards to the accounts of the prophets:

There is instruction in their stories for people of intelligence. This is not a narration which has been invented but confirmation of all that came before, a clarification of everything, and a guidance and a mercy for people who believe. (Surah Yusuf, 111)

As Allah revealed in this verse, the purpose of presenting the accounts of the messengers is to learn from them. Many, who lack a proper understanding of the Qur'an's message, regard the lives of the prophets as mere myths, or legends. They do not consider the manner in which they live their lives, or how impeccable are their characters, as examples to follow. When considering the examples of the prophets, they do not recognize the vigilant effort they made to inform the world of the morality of the Qur'an, dedicating their whole lives to promote it, and fail to take a lesson from their unshakeable faith and devotion to Allah. However, for Muslims, from whatever era, many lessons are to be learned from the lives of the prophets.

For instance, Muslims can educate themselves by reading about Prophet Muhammad's (saas) struggle against the unbelievers, pagans and hypocrites of his nation; Prophet Ibrahim's (as) struggle against his people committed to idolatry, and the manner in which he reasoned with them, to convince them not to worship idols; Prophet Musa's (as) courageous fight against the oppressive and tyrannical Pharaoh, and even against the ignorance of his own nation; Prophet Ayyub's (as) patience and submission to Allah, Who tried him with illness and distress; and, Prophet Yusuf's (as) faith in Allah, despite every stratagem conspired against him, from the time of his youth, and on into his later years.

A sincere believer can learn much about good conduct from the prophets' accounts presented in the Qur'an. For instance, despite being among those who believe, being of sincere, honest, and good character, and of those who invite others to the morality of the Qur'an, he will be faced with other people's hostility and slander. But, he will never be taken off guard when subjected to such injustice, because of his genuine efforts in the cause of Allah, and will not feel despondent. Because, as he has learned from the Qur'an, throughout history, sincere people, who lived according to the morality of the Qur'an, and invited others to the same, have been subjected to this sort of treatment. Another fact believers learn from the Qur'an is that all sincere believers who have experienced such difficulties and hardship have confronted it with patience, faith and submission.

For instance, when Prophet Muhammad (saas) was forced by the idolaters to leave Mecca with his friend, and sought refuge in the cave, he said: **“Do not be despondent, Allah is with us”** (Surat at-Tawba, 40), thereby showing his faith and devotion. Therefore, when encountering the same kind of difficulties, Muslims must remember to show similar devotion, not forgetting that Allah is with them.

Prophet Shu‘ayb (as) called his people to believe in Allah, and warned them against His punishment. However, out of both arrogance and ignorance, the leaders of his nation responded by threatening him and those who followed him. The discussion that took place between Shu‘ayb (as) and these leaders was revealed in the Qur’an:

The ruling circle of those of his people who were arrogant said, “We will drive you out of our city, Shu‘ayb, you and those who believe along with you, unless you return to our religion.” He said, “What, even though we detest it? We would be inventing lies against Allah if we returned to your religion after Allah has saved us from it. We could never return to it unless Allah our Lord so willed. Our Lord encompasses everything in His knowledge. We have put our trust in Allah. Our Lord, judge between us and our people with truth. You are the best of judges.” (Surat al-A‘raf, 88-89)

Shu‘ayb’s (as) determination, despite the threats and aggression issued against him, is another quality Muslims need to learn from prophets. Shu‘ayb’s (as) nation, on the other hand, was acting like all nations throughout history, who have denied Allah’s religion. Therefore, a Muslim, who has learned these lessons from the Qur’an, will not be taken aback, or saddened by the belligerence, calumny, and threats of the unbelievers.

Prophet Ibrahim (as) too is portrayed in the Qur’an as a role model, by his determination against the unbelievers. In order to convince them not to worship idols, Ibrahim (as) told them about Allah’s existence and unity, and demonstrated to them that the idols they worshipped were powerless objects carved from wood. Ibrahim’s (as) people responded by attempting to burn him in the fire:

They said, “Build a pyre for him and fling him into the blaze!” They tried to outwit him but We made them the lowest. (Surat as-Saffat, 97-98)

Ibrahim (as) responded to this aggression as follows:

He said, “I am going towards my Lord; He will be my guide.” (Surat as-Saffat, 99)

As we can discern from the accounts of the prophets related in the Qur’an, messengers and sincere Muslims were always confronted by their nation’s leaders who refused to believe. Despite the fact that believers merely call people to do good, throughout history, such leaders have shown hostility towards the believers, and especially to messengers, and tried to obstruct their mission. And, despite the passage of years, their methods have not changed. They accused these devout individuals of madness, corruption and greed; sought to discredit them in the eye of the people; and threatened them with imprisonment, exile and even death. Of the verses relating to the stratagems of these conspirators against the devout believers are

the following:

They said, “Are we to follow a human being, one of us? Then we would truly be misguided, quite insane! Has the Reminder been given to him of all of us? No indeed! He is an impudent liar.” (Surat al-Qamar, 24-25)

There was a group of nine men in the city causing corruption in the land and not putting things right. They said, “Let us make an oath to one another by Allah that we will fall on him and his family in the night and then say to his protector, ‘We did not witness the destruction of his family and we are telling the truth.’” They hatched a plot and We hatched a plot while they were not aware. (Surat an-Naml, 48-50)

Before them the people of Nuh denied the truth. They denied Our servant, saying, “He is madman,” and he was driven away with jeers. (Surat al-Qamar, 9)

When those who disbelieve were plotting against you to imprison you or kill you or expel you: they were plotting and Allah was plotting, but Allah is the Best of Plotters. (Surat al-Anfal, 30)

The unbelievers have often resorted to imprisoning the messengers and the sincere believers, in order to prevent them from teaching Allah’s religion. The people were duped in assuming their guilt, despite their innocence, through the false accusations assailed against them. The purpose of imprisoning them was to prevent them from having contact with other people, and to suppress their activities. Yusuf (as) was a prophet imprisoned for such reasons. Musa (as) as well was threatened by Pharaoh with imprisonment. Musa (as), however, told him of Allah’s existence and said:

He said, “The Lord of the East and the West and everything between them if you used your intellect.” (Surat ash-Shu‘ara’, 28)

Pharaoh responded with the following:

... “If you take any deity other than me, I will certainly throw you into prison.” (Surat ash-Shu‘ara’, 29)

The reason Pharaoh threatened Musa (as) with imprisonment was for his faith in Allah, and his rejection of Pharaoh’s divinity, clearly not instances that would justify a prison sentence.

The following pages will demonstrate in detail that there was no crime to justify Yusuf’s (as) imprisonment. He was a victim of false accusations, and even though all recognize his innocence, **“they thought that they should nevertheless imprison him for a time.”** (Surah Yusuf, 35) Thus he spent many years in prison. For this reason, all the believers who, after Yusuf (as), were slandered and subjected to the unjustified attacks by the unbelievers, and then imprisoned, did not despair, but appreciated its

educational opportunities and aspired to “graduate” from the School of Yusuf.

The subject of this book is imprisonment, which has become a form of education for believers, who have been subjected to it through the conspiring of the unbelievers. There, they are educated by our Lord. At first, those imprisoned for pursuing Allah’s path of righteousness, would appear to be punished, while in reality they are receiving an education, and gain insight that is beneficial both worldly and spiritually. It must be clearly remembered that such hardship is a means for attaining the blessings of Paradise.

THE LIFE OF YUSUF (as)

Messengers are noble individuals, who seek Allah in word and deed, every one of them being a model of sincerity, honesty, determination, faith, patience and devotion. Yusuf (as) was one such prophet. In the superior conduct he exhibited in the face of adversity and hardship throughout his life are many lessons for believers.

The Snare Set For Yusuf (as) By The “Alliance Of Evil”

The 12th Surah of the Qur'an is Surah Yusuf, which relates Yusuf's (as) life, from his childhood onwards. Yusuf (as) had to endure many difficulties, even as a child, through which his patience and faith in Allah was exemplary. The Surah begins with a dream had by Yusuf (as):

When Yusuf told his father, “Father! I saw eleven bright stars, and the sun and moon as well. I saw them all prostrate in front of me.” (Surah Yusuf, 4)

Yusuf's (as) father, Ya'qub (as), interpreted his son's dream, and said:

Accordingly your Lord will pick you out and teach you the true meaning of events and perfectly fulfill His blessing on you as well as on the family of Ya'qub as He fulfilled it perfectly before upon your forebears, Ibrahim and Ishaq. Most certainly your Lord is Knowing, Wise. (Surah Yusuf, 6)

The Qur'an reveals that his brothers felt a certain animosity towards him. They were envious of him because of his good character, sincerity and faith. Ya'qub (as) was aware of this, and he warned Yusuf (as) against his brothers in the following way:

He said, “My son, don't tell your brothers your dream lest they devise some scheme to injure you, Satan is a clear-cut enemy to man.” (Surah Yusuf, 5)

Because of their intense jealousy, Yusuf's (as) brothers decided to kill him. Out of their attempts to fulfill their plan, there is much to be learned. They regarded themselves as accomplices in the same aim, in other words, formed an alliance. They then carefully considered the details of their plot against Yusuf (as), and proceeded to carry it out. The Qur'an reveals the discussion held amongst them:

In Yusuf and his brothers there are Signs for every one of those who wants to ask. When they declared, “Why! Yusuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we are although we constitute a powerful group. Our father is clearly making a mistake. Kill Yusuf or expel him to some land so that your father will look to you alone and then you can be people who do right.” One of them said,

“Do not take Yusuf’s life but throw him to the bottom of the well, so that some travelers may discover him, if this is something that you have to do.” (Surah Yusuf, 7-10)

As stated at the beginning of the verse, there are lessons to be learned from the experience of Yusuf (as) and his brothers. Therefore, when reading these verses, Muslims must learn from them, understand their wisdom, and apply it to their own lives. For instance, Yusuf’s (as) brothers were envious of Ya‘qub’s (as) love for him, to such an extent that they contemplated murdering him. The Prophet Muhammad (saas) also warned believers against envy:

Abu Hurairah said that Rasulullah (saas) said: "Beware of envy, for envy devours good (deeds) like fire devours firewood." (Abu Dawud)

It is surprising that Yusuf’s (as) brothers would have formed an “alliance of evil,” and joined forces against a devout believer. The purpose of their conspiracy was to separate Yusuf (as) and Ya‘qub from each other, to then kill Yusuf (as), who they knew to be blessed with superior qualities.

Throughout history, unbelievers have joined forces and cooperated against sincere believers. In every age, the evil formed alliances with the aim of harming the good, to inhibit their efforts, and to exile or even kill them. Allah, on the other hand, in every instance, brought their conspiracies to naught and destroyed their alliances. One such example is in Ya‘qub’s (as) warning and support for Yusuf (as) against the evil conspiracy of his sons.

The False Evidence Fabricated By The Alliance Of Evil

In that which followed these verses, it is revealed that Yusuf’s (as) brothers decided to, as part of their plan, to throw him down into a well, after first, though with some difficulty, obtaining their father’s permission to take Yusuf (as) out to play. Just as they are about to throw Yusuf (as) into the well, Allah sends him the following revelation:

But when, in fact, they did go out with him and gathered all together and agreed to put him at the bottom of the well, We then revealed to him that: “You will inform them of this deed they perpetrate at a time when they are totally unaware.” (Surah Yusuf, 15)

Yusuf’s (as) brothers return home following their misdeed, and give their father the following excuse as to what happened:

[Yusuf's brothers say], "Father, we went out to run a race and left Yusuf together with our things and then a wolf appeared and ate him up but you are never going to believe us now, not even though we really tell the truth." They then produced his shirt with false blood on it. He said, "It is merely that your lower selves have suggested something to you which you did; but beauty lies in showing steadfastness. It is Allah alone Who is my Help in face of the event that you describe." (Surah Yusuf, 17-18)

Allah indicates, in these verses, that Yusuf's (as) brothers had thought out every detail, and even fabricated false evidence in order to convince their father that they have done no wrong. Hypocrites and unbelievers do not refrain from false accusations and fabricating evidence when they plot against Muslims. And, Yusuf's (as) brothers had aimed to convince their father of their honesty, but as Ya'qub's (as) response suggests, believers will usually suspect the plotting unbelievers, not being duped by their fabricated evidence. It is only other unbelievers who believe the lies of the unbelievers.

Entering the School of Yusuf

After Yusuf (as) had been placed in the well, some travelers found him, and sold him to an Egyptian governor for a small amount of money. Thus, Allah placed Yusuf (as) in Egypt and taught him "the true meaning of events." And, when he grew up, he was given knowledge and right judgment. (Surah Yusuf, 21-22)

The events that lead to Yusuf's (as) imprisonment begin with the governor's wife seeking to seduce him (as). Yusuf (as) responded to her advances in the following way:

The woman whose house it was solicited him. She barred the doors and said, "Come over here!" He said, "Allah is my refuge! He is My lord and has been good to me with where I live. Those who do wrong will surely not succeed." (Surah Yusuf, 23)

After speaking these words, Yusuf (as) heads for the door, but the woman persists, and the back of his shirt is torn by her in the doorway. Just then, however, her husband arrives. Without the slightest hesitation, she says: **"How should a man whose intention was to harm your family be punished for what he did except with prison or painful punishment?"** (Surah Yusuf, 25). Thus she slandered Yusuf (as), and sought to have him imprisoned by inciting those around her against him. In response to this allegation, Yusuf (as) expressed his innocence and said:

He said: "It was she who tried to seduce me." (Surah Yusuf, 26)

Then, a woman close to the governor's wife suggested the following:

... A witness from her people then declared, "If his shirt is torn in front, she speaks the truth and he has clearly told a shameless lie. If his shirt is torn at the back, then she has lied and he has clearly told the simple truth." (Surah Yusuf, 26-27)

Yusuf's (as) innocence was evident, and the woman's husband, now recognizing what had actually happened, said:

He saw the shirt torn at the back and said, "The source of this is women's deviousness. Without a doubt your guile is very great. Yusuf, ignore all this, and you, my wife, should ask forgiveness for your evil act. There is no doubt that you are in the wrong." (Surah Yusuf, 28-29)

As these verses reveal, Yusuf's (as) innocence was well confirmed, and even the other women of the city knew of it, and yet, Yusuf (as) was imprisoned for his chastity, and for not acquiescing to their lifestyle. The governor's wife herself attests to this. Almost the entire city is aware of Yusuf's (as) innocence and wrongful imprisonment:

She said, "You see! It's him you blamed me for. I tried seducing him but he refused. If he does not do what I order him, he will be put in prison and humiliated." (Surah Yusuf, 32)

Another verse announces the following:

Then, after they had seen the Signs, they thought that they should nevertheless imprison him for a time. (Surah Yusuf, 35)

The verses reveal that all knew of Yusuf's (as) innocence, but that they decided to imprison him nonetheless. The reason for their punishing Yusuf (as) so was in reality because of his faith in and devotion to Allah. Just as Yusuf (as) suffered from his brothers' envy and enmity for his faith and morality, he earned the hostility of these for the very same reasons.

Yusuf's (as) exemplary conduct, faith in Allah, and determination, in the face of these unjust accusations, slander and then punishment, is revealed in the Qur'an as follows:

He said, "My Lord, the prison is preferable to me than what they call on me to do. Unless You turn their guile away from me, it may well be that I will fall for them and so become a man of ignorance." His Lord replied to him and turned away from him their female guile and deviousness. He is the One Who Hears, the One Who Knows. (Surah Yusuf, 33-34)

Throughout history, believers, who were imprisoned as a consequence of slander, or suffered some other hardship, demonstrated that they would never compromise their morality, thus following the example set by Yusuf (as). Sincere believers submitted to their prison sentences, otherwise considered by the unbelievers as suffering and punishment. All the hardship they encountered in their efforts to earn Allah's good pleasure served only to increase their determination.

Yusuf's (as) Days In Prison

Throughout his stay in prison, Yusuf (as) demonstrated his superior character through his patience, submission to Allah, determination and insight. He told the other inmates about the existence of Allah and His unity, and warned them against worshipping others besides Him. He also used his gift for interpreting dreams to explain to his fellow inmate the meaning of his dream, but only after first reminding them of Allah.

Yusuf's (as) release from prison came under unusual circumstances. News of his wisdom and trustworthiness reached the ears of the ruler through a friend of his, released from the prison some time before. When those who had slandered him admitted to their guilt, his innocence was established, and he was granted the treasury to administer. The verses reveal these events as follows:

The King said, "Bring him to me straight away! So I may draw him very close to me." When he had spoken with him, he declared, "Today you are trusted, established in our sight." He said, "Entrust the country's stores to me. In truth I am a knowing guardian." And thus We established Yusuf in the land so he could live in any place he pleased. We grant Our grace to anyone We will and We do not allow to go to waste the wage of any people who do good. But the wages of the Hereafter are the best for people who believe and fear their Lord. (Surah Yusuf, 54-57)

As these verses demonstrate, Allah rewards believers with a good life, following the hardship, sufferings, and cruelty inflicted on them at the hands of the unbelievers. This good can take the form of authority or wealth here on Earth, as well as the gift of Paradise in the Hereafter. Yusuf (as) found a reward following the hardship he experienced, here on Earth, as he will in the Hereafter. Allah says:

As for those who make Allah their friend, and His Messenger and those who believe: it is the party of Allah who are victorious! (Surat al-Ma'ida, 56)

Allah has written, "I will be victorious, I and My Messengers." Allah is Most Strong, Almighty. (Surat al-Mujadala, 21)

Yusuf's (as) life is an example proving that Allah's promise is always true. Yusuf (as) encountered first hardship and suffering, and then betrayal and slander. However, he underwent a process of spiritual education in prison, being a kind of school. In the end, Allah's promise was realized, when he was cleared of all wrongdoing, established in the land, and strengthened with knowledge and riches.

WISDOM AND GOOD FOR BELIEVERS IN THE SCHOOL OF YUSUF

From here on, the term “School of Yusuf” will be used instead of “prison,” because, as we have previously stated, imprisonment, for believers, is not a punishment but a form of education. Prisons are “universities” for spiritual development. Those devoid of faith are unable to understand why believers do not consider prison as punishment. It is still more difficult for them to understand why believers are even at the rewards they are to receive in the Hereafter for their being submitted to such circumstances. Believers obviously do not wish to be imprisoned, or try to be so, but if they were to be, they would be confident of it as an opportunity for spiritual development. They see Allah’s wisdom, goodness and beauty inherent in every event, big or small He creates.

The reason they regard prison as a School of Yusuf, for seeking Allah’s good pleasure, is that they know there to be good in everything Allah ordains. They know that whatever Allah wills for them, it is in their best interest. At first glance, one would easily suppose that there are a series of technical causes for which a believer is imprisoned, though the truth is altogether different, when events are considered in the light of the Qur’an. A Muslim’s imprisonment, the duration of his sentence, and the moment of his release, are all dependent on Allah’s will. Nothing and no one can be the cause of anyone’s imprisonment unless Allah wills it. A person will be confronted with such a situation only if it written for him according to his destiny. If Allah wills for a Muslim to be imprisoned, there will be much benefit and good in the time he spends there. But this is a truth only those few of profound insight and strong faith can comprehend.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi is one whose life is an example in this regard. Every time he was sent to the School of Yusuf, he reflected on the wisdom and good in his imprisonment, and shared his thoughts with all believers. The letters he wrote to his students while in confinement contained much valuable advice. Ultimately, he conveyed his profound wisdom in his master work, *Risale-i Nur*, which he also wrote in prison. In everything he wrote, he refers to his circumstances as being beneficial, and reminded others that everything must be considered through faith and submission to Allah. Particularly in his later years, when despite his ailing health, Said Nursi was kept in unheated cells through bitter cold of winter days, where he was often barred from any contact with the outside-world, he continued to believe that everything occurred according to fate, and that everything must be acquiesced to with submission to Allah. As he wrote in one of his letters:

Then at that point, just when in those freezing conditions I was most in need of rest and not catching cold and not thinking of the world, I was overcome with anger and vexation at those who had sent me into this intolerable exile, isolation, imprisonment, and oppression, in a way that spelt out their hatred and ill-intentions. Divine grace came to my assistance, and the following was imparted to my heart: “Divine Determining, which is pure justice, has a large part in the wrongful oppression which these people are inflicting on you. And you have food to eat in this prison; that sustenance of yours called you here. It should be met with contentment and resignation. And dominical wisdom and mercy have a large part, which is to illuminate those in this prison and console them, and to gain you reward. This share should be met with endless thanks and patience”...³

Those who enter the School of Yusuf, do so because it is written in their fate, and they must therefore accept these circumstances with patience, gratitude and submission. Every sincere Muslim who is tried with prison must, like Bediuzzaman, find and uncover the wisdom and good inherent in his confinement, in order to make the most of such an important period for spiritual development. Bediuzzaman also said that in the garden of the School of Yusuf, there are good people as well as bad ones, and reminded the believers to see the good ones but not the evil ones, and not to occupy their minds unnecessarily with such matters:

Secondly: According to the meaning of “Whoever believes in Divine Determining is saved from grief and sorrow,” and “Look on the good side of things,” and, Those who listen to the Word and follow the best [meaning] in it; those are the ones whom Allah has guided, and those are the ones endowed with understanding, (Surat az-Zumar, 19) we should now look on the good side of everything, the aspect that affords ease of mind, so that meaningless, unnecessary, harmful, ugly, distressing, temporary circumstances do not hold our attention and preoccupy our minds. In the Eighth Word, one man entered a garden while another left it. The fortunate man looked at the flowers and beautiful things, and relaxed and enjoyed himself. But the unfortunate one looked only at the dirty, ugly things, although he was unable to clean them up, so he was nauseated and upset instead of resting, and then went on his way. Now, the stages of man’s social life, and especially the School of Joseph, resembles a garden. It contains both ugly and beautiful things, and distressing and happy things. The sensible person is he who busies himself with the beautiful, happiness-inducing things, and ignores the ugly, distressing things, and offers thanks happily instead of complaining querulously.⁴

As Bediuzzaman said, those who see the beauty and goodness through that which Allah ordains will live with peace of mind, both in this world and in the Hereafter. An evil person cannot harm them, and no evil deed can cause them to despair. For those who do not believe in Allah, the experience is altogether different. They are quick to despair when faced with adversity, are susceptible to anxiety, and therefore are at loss already in this world, and again in the Hereafter. In the Qur’an, Allah reveals the condition of these people:

Among the people there is one who worships Allah right on the edge. If good befalls him, he is content with it, but if a trial befalls him, he reverts to his former ways, losing both this world and the Hereafter. That is indeed sheer loss. (Surat al-Hajj, 11)

The Wisdom in Yusuf’s (as) Prison Term And The Good It Led To

Yusuf’s (as) life was permeated with events demonstrating that Allah ordains all things according to His wisdom for some specific good. Not only his imprisonment, but every conspiracy waged against him, ultimately turned out in his favor.

For instance, his brothers cast him into the well with the intent of killing him. This however, led to his venture into Egypt, and then, to becoming the treasurer of that country. The governor’s wife’s house, in which he had been living, was where he was slandered by that very woman. But, his subsequent imprisonment led only to further good. Imprisonment due to false accusations would be perceived, by those who cannot comprehend the inherent good and benefits of such an occurrence, as “bad luck” or a

“misfortune.” But, in the case of Yusuf (as), the entire city came to recognize him for his superior morality, chastity, his strict adherence to Allah’s limits, as well as his faith and honesty. As well, his words of wisdom reached the ear of the ruler, by which he was eventually appointed to administer the treasury of Egypt. Therefore, the best disposition for a Muslim to adopt is to surrender completely to the fate determined for him by Allah, and to await patiently and in submission what Allah will show him. Allah ordains everything according to a sublime plan, down to the minutest detail, of which we cannot know in advance. Yusuf (as) acknowledged this truth in the following way:

He [Yusuf] raised his parents up onto the throne. The others fell prostrate in front of him. He said, “My father, truly this is now the interpretation of the dream I had. My Lord has made it all come true; and He was kind to me by letting me out of prison and brought you from the desert when Satan had caused dissent between me and my brothers. My Lord is kind to anyone He wills. He is indeed All-Knowing and All-Wise.” (Surah Yusuf, 100)

The Wisdom and Good of the School of Yusuf

As we stated at the beginning of the book, Allah confers countless blessings and much in goodness and wisdom in all things, irrespective whether we recognize it or not. However, Muslims are obliged to turn to Allah, when something happens to them, in order to discover and understand the inherent wisdom and good in it. This is true for all believers in the School of Yusuf. In this chapter, we will speak of the fortitude and edification the School of Yusuf confers upon the believers, and the grace from Allah it leads to.

All Are Witness To The Brotherhood, Loyalty, Determination And Sincerity Of The Believers

Believers come to the School of Yusuf, as it was with Yusuf (as) himself, through slander and false accusations on the part of unbelievers, who want to spread immorality and the denial of the true religion among men. They persecute believers in public, and aim to create false impressions of them, by means of fabricated evidence, false witness, and wrongful allegations, which result in their imprisonment. Islamic scholars, like Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan, and Imam-i A’zam, wound up in the School of Yusuf as a result of similar slander and unfounded accusations.

The allegation most frequently used against devout believers is that they seek personal gain. This false accusation was also made in the past, against all the prophets and their devoted followers. Unbelievers are so certain that believers are united because of greed that they maintain, “... **Do not spend on those who are with the Messenger of Allah, so that they may go away...**” (Surat al-Munafiqun, 7). As the verse reveals, they consider that believers are allied for the purpose of material gain, and if such gain were withheld, they would disperse.

This is a reflection of the ignorance that considers, “expect them to be as you yourself are.” Those who do not believe in Allah would forsake even their parents, or a long-time friend, if their own interest were at stake even in the slightest way. According to them, it is naivety to make friends with those who cannot provide some material gain, or to be loyal at all. The duration of their friendships depend on the

size and importance of what is at stake. As this is how those who are irreligious think, they consider believers to do the same. However, they will surely be astounded when they witness the believers' determination, loyalty, and fortitude in the face of their aggression, slander, unjustified accusations, and obstructions against them. It is then that they realize that their efforts to impede the believers and to wreak their unity will not have produced the desired results.

Sincere believers, irrespective of the prevailing conditions, do not forsake their faith, prayer, morality and loyalty towards one another. In several verses of the Qur'an, Allah relates the superior qualities of the believers. The following are some examples:

The believers are only those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and then have had no doubt and have strived with their wealth and themselves in the Way of Allah. They are the ones who are true to their word. (Surat al-Hujurat, 15)

Many a Prophet has fought, when there were many thousands with him! They did not give up in the face of what assailed them in the Way of Allah, nor did they weaken, nor did they yield. Allah loves the steadfast. All they said was, "Our Lord, forgive us our wrong actions and any excesses we went to in what we did and make our feet firm and help us against these disbelieving people." (Surah Al 'Imran, 146-147)

One of the many benefits resulting from the hardship believers had to endure, like imprisonment, or unjustified aggression, was the reinforcement of their loyalty, and strong bond to one another. These qualities were often witnessed for the first time in their respective societies. Not only those of their own epochs, but also future generations came eventually to recognize the sincere believers' determination and loyalty to one another, and that they never despair, not even under the most extreme conditions. They knew that, as our Prophet (saas) also said: "*Whosoever alleviates a believer's hardship of this world, Allah, the Almighty, would alleviate his hardship and difficulty of the Day of Judgment.*" (Muslim) and supported one another in the best way.

In more recent history, the determination shown by Bediuzzaman and his followers, their good spirits and perseverance in the School of Yusuf, were good examples of this. They were role models for believers in their own time, as well as our day. Bediuzzaman, while in the School of Yusuf, wrote the following in his letters to fellow believers:

My Dear, Loyal, Unshakeable Brothers, who do not become dispirited at difficulties and abandon us! ... It appears necessary that like in former times the people of reality used to gather together and meet at least once or twice a year, the *Risale-i Nur* students gather together every few years in the School of Joseph. In keeping with the God-fearing and ascetic way of the *Risale-i Nur*, and its teaching those most in need, everyone, even those who oppose it, and to allow its collective personality to speak, if it entails a thousand difficulties and tribulations, it is of no importance whatsoever. A few of our weak brothers becoming fed up in our previous prisons and leaving the circle of the *Risale-i Nur* caused immeasurable loss to them but no harm to the *Risale-i Nur*. More resolute and sincere students appeared in their stead. Since the trials of this world are transient and pass swiftly, leaving us their fruits and rewards, we should

trust in Divine grace and offer thanks in patience.⁵

In yet another letter, Bediuzzaman addressed his loyal friends in the School of Yusuf in the following way:

My Dear, Loyal Brothers! It is my opinion that those who are not shaken by the severe ordeal of these two “Schools of Joseph,” the former and the present, and do not abandon its lessons, and do not give up being its students although their mouths have been burnt by the scalding soup, and whose morale is not broken despite all this aggression, will be applauded by the people of reality and coming generations; just as the angels and spirit beings applaud them. However, since among you are some who are ill, delicate, or poor, the physical distress is excessive. But thinking of the others of you consoling them and being perfect examples in patience and good conduct, and compassionate brothers offering solidarity and kind attention, and intelligent companions in discussing lessons, and mirrors reflecting fine moral qualities, thus reducing the physical hardships to nothing, my concern for you, whom I love more than my own spirit, was allayed.⁶

In our time, we can look at past events and learn from the experience of sincere believers. That those events constitute examples for believers to follow demonstrates that: the hardship they suffered eventually turned out in their favor. They earned the recognition of their contemporaries, as well as the respect of subsequent generations.

Injustice To Believers Does Not Go Unnoticed By Society And Their Good Morality, Honesty And Trustworthiness Is Revealed

Inevitably, believers will be slandered and vilified, irrespective of the era in which they are in, because the unbelievers find it necessary to find some justification to impede the believers’ efforts, and to win the support of the public against them. In the story of Yusuf (as), the governor’s wife’s accusation was used as an excuse to imprison him, but ultimately to interfere with his mission as messenger.

Effectively, believers will be scrutinized ruthlessly. But, they ought not to worry, unlike others who would become nervous and apprehensive, as they do not live by Allah’s commandments. In fact, many of them harbor a secret or two, which they wish not to have divulged. In other words, they have something to hide, like some corruption they may be guilty for, or fraud, or some other illicit form of activity. Muslims, on the other hand, know that they will be called to account for their every deed, and therefore, live by the morality of the Qur’an, and refrain from any activity for which they will not be able to explain themselves. They do not eye anyone else’s property. They are not unfair towards anyone. They refrain from the prohibited, and they do not pursue personal gain at any expense. Also, they scrupulously avoid fomenting conflict, for which they have been forbidden in the Qur’an, but instead promote dutifulness, and try to set an example of harmonious interaction. For these reasons, they are not afraid to have their lives scrutinized, and enjoy the peace of mind of knowing that, irrespective of how carefully they are investigated, there is nothing corrupt to be found in it. They know that every inquiry will conclude in their favor, and that they will only reveal just how pure, innocent and honest they are.

For instance, Yusuf’s (as) imprisonment resulted ultimately in his superior morality, purity, honesty and his faith in Allah being recognized. When he was called before the presence of the ruler, following the many years he spent in prison, he himself demanded an inquiry, in order to establish his innocence.

It is evident that only an incorrupt and honest person would demand an inquiry with confidence. The ruler assembled the woman who slandered him, as well as the other women privy to the situation, and asked them about Yusuf (as). When the women stated that they had not seen any wrongdoing on the part of Yusuf (as), the governor's wife admitted her guilt. Thus, Yusuf's (as) innocence was established by the very people who had originally slandered him. Surah Yusuf recounts this event in the following way:

The King said, "Bring him to me straight away!" but when the envoy came to him, he said, "Go back to your master and enquire of him what happened about the women who cut their hands. My Lord has knowledge of their cunning guile." He said, "What was this past affair of yours when you solicited Yusuf?" Then they said "Allah forbid! We know no bad of him." The governor's wife then said, "The truth has now emerged. Indeed I tried to seduce him then and he has simply told the honest truth." [Yusuf said,] "In this way he may know at last that I did not dishonor him behind his back and that Allah most surely does not guide the deviousness of the dishonorable." [Yusuf said,] "I do not say my self was free from blame. The self indeed commands to evil acts—except for those my Lord has mercy on. My Lord, He is Forgiving, Merciful." (Surah Yusuf, 50-53)

Yusuf (as) assembled those who knew about this affair to have them admit to his innocence. When the accusations against him had first circulated, after which he was imprisoned, it would have been presumed by others that he was guilty. In the end, however, he was recognized as one worthy enough to assume a very important post, being handed over the treasuries of Egypt.

Allah reveals in the Qur'an that He will bring to naught the conspiracies that have been plotted against the believers, and that they will be proven right after having been wrongly accused. With Allah's help, believers will be exonerated of all guilt. The verses say:

You who believe! Do not be like those who abused Musa. Allah absolved him of what they said and he was highly honored with Allah. (Surat al-Ahzab, 69)

At every opportunity, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi expressed his belief that there was much good in the many investigations carried out into his and his students' lives. Because, these devout individuals emerged from these inquiries with their innocence proven, both in their actions and in their writings. As a result of these investigations, their integrity and sincerity was confirmed by the authority of the government. Bediuzzaman had the following to say in this respect:

"But it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you." (Surat al-Baqara, 216) Chiefly, while expecting a severely critical report from the Experts Committee in Ankara, they sent a commendatory one. And although they found less than ten errors in five chests of copies of the *Risale-i Nur*, we proved in court that the points they had shown to be errors were completely correct, and that they themselves had been in error in the matters they said were wrong; we showed between five and ten errors and mistakes in their five pages of report. And while awaiting severe reprisals in the face of the Fruits of Belief and Defences Collection, which we had sent to seven government offices, and the entire *Risale-i Nur* which had been sent to the Ministry of Justice, and especially in return for the effective, stinging slaps

dealt by the confidential treatises, they responded extremely leniently, and like the even consoling letter sent to us by the Prime Minister, they were most conciliatory and did not attack us. This proved decisively that as a miracle of Divine grace, the truths of the *Risale-i Nur* had defeated them, making them study its treatises like a guide. It made those broad circles into a sort of study circle and saved the belief of numerous hesitating and bewildered people, causing us spiritual joy and profit far exceeding our distress.⁷

Bediuzzaman's pearls of wisdom point to yet another benefit; during these proceedings, many were introduced to his *Risale-i Nur Collections*, in which Allah's existence and unity were explained. Their reading led many to accept faith, as well enabling them to come to better know the writer.

In his writings, Bediuzzaman compared the hardship and severe trials as a form of distillation, where gold and copper are separated. Just as a touchstone distinguishes gold from copper, difficulties will bring out the believer's superior qualities, and suppress the evil thoughts of the selfish ego. Such trials demonstrate the power of the believer's faith and make it known in the rest of the society. The hardship experienced by Bediuzzaman and his students revealed them to be as good as gold. It was demonstrated to all that their work served only to teach people about Allah's existence, without any ill will or selfish interest. In this way, those who had doubts about their intentions recognized their superior morality, despite the difficulty of their circumstance. Bediuzzaman had the following to say on the subject:

Then this morning the following was imparted to me: for us to be set this rigorous examination, and to be struck on the touchstone numerous times to see clearly whether we are gold or brass, and to be tried unfairly in every respect, and to be passed through ever finer sieves three or four times to see whether our evil-commanding souls take a share or are playing any tricks, is extremely necessary for our service, which should be purely and solely in the name of truth and reality, so that Divine Determining and dominical grace permit it. For by being exhibited in this field of trial and examination confronted by obdurate, unjust enemies and their pretexts, everyone has understood that there is no trickery, no egotism, no malice, no worldly or personal interests, nor those that look to the Hereafter, mixed in with our service, and that it is completely sincere and proceeds from truth and reality. If it had remained concealed, it could have been given numerous meanings. The mass of believers would not have had confidence in it. They would have said: "Perhaps they are deceiving us," and the elite too would have had their suspicions. Thinking that "perhaps they are acting the same as some of those who sell themselves to acquire spiritual rank for themselves and to win confidence," they would not feel completely certain about it. Now, following the examination, even the most stubborn and obdurate person is compelled to submit. If your hardship is one, your profits are a thousandfold. Allah willing.⁸

People Come To Know The Believers, And The Better They Know Them, The More They Respect Them

There is much wisdom inherent in a Muslim's term in the School of Yusuf, one facet of which is that garners public attention. If believers were never imprisoned, they would probably be less well-known, and people would be less knowledgeable of the good they do. With their imprisonment, a great number of people come to know of the believers, and to witness their superior morality.

The condition under which a person's true character surfaces is one of hardship and affliction.

Evidently, one who is wronged, slandered, and abused through much hardship, will be recognized, by those perceiving his situation, for his sincerity, if he has been patient, modest, calm, friendly, forgiving, conciliatory and uncomplaining. In each instance, Bediuzzaman's imprisonment or exile reflected such good and wisdom. As a result, the writings of Bediuzzaman and his students have become better known, and more and more people have turned to the *Risale-i Nur* for its insights.

Said Nursi relates his thoughts in this respect:

Second Instance of Wisdom and Benefit: The service to belief at this time through the *Risale-i Nur* has to be through advertising it everywhere and attracting the attention of those in need. Thus, attention is attracted to the *Risale-i Nur* through our imprisonment; it is like an advertisement. The most stubborn or those in most need find it and save their belief; their obduracy is broken and they are saved from danger, and the *Risale-i Nur*'s circle of study is widened.⁹

Yes, since the *Risale-i Nur* question is of importance for the Islamic world in general and this country in particular, there should be lively gatherings such as that in order to attract everyone's attention to its truths. For in its glittering fashion, beyond all our hopes and precautions, and our concealing it, and our enemies belittling it, and outside our wills, the *Risale-i Nur* teaches its truths openly to friend and foe alike. It unhesitatingly divulges its most private secrets to the most distant stranger. Since the truth is this, we should consider our trifling difficulties to be a bitter medicine like quinine, and offering thanks in patience, say: "This too will pass, Allah willing."¹⁰

In The School Of Yusuf, Believers Demonstrate Their Devotion And Support For Each Other, And Find An Opportunity To Purify Of Their Inadequacies

Another positive aspect of the School of Yusuf is the solidarity it reinforces among believers who are inmates. They are together 24 hours a day, in a small building, day or night, knowing each others' every temperament, but regard each other with compassion, and learn from each others better behavior. They are role models, each in their own way; some by their purity, others with their intellect, relentless effort, knowledge of the Qur'an, devotion, and others yet, modesty. If each were to learn the others' better qualities, by the end of their prison term, they would have attained a level of heightened spiritual maturity. Also, while in prison, they come to fully realize the value of friendship and brotherhood. Their bonds of friendship strengthen, and they find the opportunity of reflecting on and appreciating their brothers' noble morality and tireless efforts in the cause of Allah. While in prison, believers show towards their fellow brothers the best they can, under the circumstances. They prefer their brothers' safety, comfort, and well-being over their own. These are all examples of the superior qualities possessed by those who have profited from the teachings of the Qur'an. In the following verse, Allah refers to the good character of the believers, their love for one another, and their valuing of others above themselves:

... [Believers] prefer them [immigrants] to themselves even if they themselves are needy. It is the people who are safe-guarded from the avarice of their own selves who are successful. (Surat al-Hashr, 9)

Bediuzzaman considered that one of the benefits of prison life for believers was that it was an opportunity for them to see much more of one another. His brothers which he had the rare opportunity of seeing outside of prison, for one or the other reason, he was able to be with all the time. He could converse with them, and share his reflections. The believers, who were gaining an important education here, became, from the benefit of sharing Bediuzzaman's knowledge, the leaders of the future. They were able to teach the superiority of the morality of the Qur'an, and the truths they learned from the *Risale-i Nur*. In one of his many works, Bediuzzaman discussed the benefit of the opportunity of spending much time with his brothers:

Seeing with very little expense true friends more compassionate than brothers, and brothers of the Hereafter like spiritual guides, here in the workless, compounded physical and spiritual winter of this School of Joseph, which is a department of the *Madrasatul'-Zahra*; and visiting them, profiting from their personal qualities, and receiving strength from their fine characteristics, which like light are diffused through transparent objects, and from their spiritual assistance, joy, and consolation; all changes the form of this calamity, making it a sort of veil to Divine grace. Yes, a subtle facet of this hidden grace is that all the *Risale-i Nur* students here are called "*Hoja*;" they are spoken of respectfully as "the *hojas*... the *hojas*." There is a further subtle allusion in this, that just as this prison has turned into a *madrasah* (religious school), so the *Risale-i Nur* students have all become teachers, and thanks to these *hojas* the other prisons will also all become schools, Allah willing.¹¹

From Bediuzzaman's reflections, we gather that he could recognize good in even the worst and harshest circumstances, that he could face anything with the most positive attitude, that he was optimistic at all times, never fell into despair or hopelessness, and that he was a person of much fortitude and insight. These are the salient qualities of those who believe in Allah, from the bottom of their hearts, who submit to him, and have patience and fear Him. As reward for Bediuzzaman's positive attitude, Allah made the prison a locale for which to educate himself, from which both he and his students benefited much, and through which other inmates were able to learn as well.

After the passing of many decades, Muslims still remember Bediuzzaman, who learned from as well as taught others in the School of Yusuf, and benefit, even today, from his pearls of wisdom.

EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL OF YUSUF

The previous chapter dealt with the benefits of the School of Yusuf for the believers. Surely, one of the most important benefits of the School of Yusuf is the spiritual development the believers receive there. There, believers learn to control and restrain their selfish egos, deepen their faith, and improve their morality. The “degrees” earned there will be a source of contentment in the Hereafter, and they will be grateful to Allah for their term.

Patience And Submission In The School Of Yusuf

A true Muslim is always patient and submissive to Allah. The secret of patience and submission lies in the knowledge that Allah ordains all things, according to a predetermined fate, as the 49th verse of Surat al-Qamar states: **“We have created all things according to a fixed decree.”** For this reason, time spent in the School of Yusuf serves to strengthen a believer’s patience and submission to Allah.

True patience and submission are two valuable qualities that those who do not believe can never attain. For instance, the inmates of a prison are there as a punishment for their crimes. Throughout their term, they complain, fall into despair, revolt, or “break down,” mentally as well as physically, because of the constraint and adverse conditions, like not being with their families, not having their freedom, and various other factors. Instead of reforming themselves, they often become even worse out of their obstinacy.

The attitude of a believer while in prison is entirely different. First of all, even though he is wrongly imprisoned, he does not complain or rebel. He knows that, whatever happens, it is the will of Allah, and he yields to it with complete submission to Him, as required in the following verse:

Say: “Nothing can happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is Our Master. It is in Allah that the believers should put their trust.” (Surat at-Tawba, 51)

As he expects every hardship he experiences in prison to bring him an increase in his reward in the Hereafter, he bears patiently, as the 5th verse of Surat al-Maarij stipulates: **“Therefore be patient with a patience which is beautiful.”** He prays for his hardship to be eased, but also receives hardship with a positive attitude, with his thoughts on the Hereafter. For instance, the tightening of his the handcuffs around his wrists, or the patience with which he bears the cold in his cell, makes him ponder upon the Hereafter, and he is gladdened. This is the secret to endure the trials of this life, and it is only the believers who are aware of it.

A believer’s patience under difficult conditions is more than simply enduring. Because, the enduring of the non-religious is fraught with despair and recalcitrance, lacking in submission to Allah. Patience, on the other hand, is comprised of contentment, optimism, or maturity derived from faith. Surely, being confined behind bars is a circumstance that requires patience from believers. However, each time the Muslim looks at the bars, he thinks of the reward he can expect, and is assured. Also, he will bear patiently his separation from his brothers, whether it lasts for days, months and even years. Every time he

thinks of his brothers, he will consider Paradise. As he can hope to be with them for eternity in the Hereafter, thinking of his circumstances will comfort and motivate him.

No one can know what the next moment holds. This knowledge rests only with Allah, Who in many verses of the Qur'an reveals that the believers' final outcome is a happy one, as, for instance, **"The Last will be better for you than the First. Your Lord will soon give to you and you will be satisfied."** (Surat ad-Duha, 4-5). A believer knows this to be true, and thus awaits patiently and submissively the day when he will be granted his reward.

However, there can be that which will happen that will delay his release from prison. For a non-religious person, this is considered "bad luck" or "misfortune," whereas, for a believer, who knows that it is a part of Allah's greater plan, it is something that is ordained with wisdom, and for a purpose he is not aware of. For this reason, he does not despair or panic. He acquiesces with patience, as one submitting to Allah, to that which has been fated for him. What the matter will be beneficial for him, or how and when it will be, is decided by Allah, and he knows that what our Lord wills is best. He relents in submission to everything that happens, as required in the following verse: **"... It may be that you hate something when it is good for you and it may be that you love something when it is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know."** (Surat al-Baqara, 216)

For example, Yusuf (as) asked a fellow inmate, who was to be released before him, to mention him to his master. However, he forgot to do so, and so Yusuf (as) remained in prison many more years:

He [Yusuf] said to the one of them he knew was saved, "Please mention me when you are with your lord," but Satan made him forget to remind his lord, and so he stayed in prison for several years. (Surah Yusuf, 42)

Those who do not know to trust and submit to the fate determined by Allah, would consider it as a "misfortune" that this person forget to mention his friend to his master, and would be angered or bothered. But, a man like Yusuf (as), who knows that everything is ordained according to a prescribed fate, who is patient and faithful, will react in a way that reflects his knowing that there is some good to come of it. Most importantly, he will know that there is no one who could bring about his release from prison unless Allah wills it, not even his friend's master. As with all circumstances, he will turn to Allah and pray.

Every Muslim believes in Allah and knows the importance of faith. Therefore, he is patient and submissive. As there are many instances in the School of Yusuf requiring patience and submission, these qualities will be strengthened and a maturity of faith will emerge.

First of all, believers, who are imprisoned wrongfully, are patient despite the injustice against them, and have faith in Allah. However, when the conditions, means, environment and the prison term are considered, the benefits of patience and submission to Allah become apparent. Days, month or years can be spent in confinement, but for a believer who is patient and relies on Allah, their importance is in the presence of Allah. Every hour endured there in patience, every minute, and even every second, for a believer, will be rewarded with Paradise. Allah reveals that the reward for patience through hardship is Paradise:

Those who believe and migrate and strive in the Way of Allah with their wealth and themselves have a higher rank with Allah. They are the ones who are victorious. Their Lord gives them the good news of His mercy and good pleasure and Gardens where they will enjoy everlasting delight, remaining in them timelessly, for ever and ever. Truly there is an immense reward with Allah. (Surat at-Tawba, 20-22)

Said Nursi wrote in notes to his friends that one who hopes for Paradise can be patient under difficult conditions, and always sees the good in that which happens:

My Dear, Loyal, Constant, and Faithful Brothers! I am describing some of my circumstances here, not to sadden you or to take any physical measures, but so that I might profit more from your shared prayers, and you might practice greater self-restraint, caution, patience, and forbearance, and earnestly preserve your solidarity. The torment and distress I suffer here in one day is more than I suffered in a month in Eskişehir Prison. The ghastly Masons have inflicted one of their unfeeling fellows on me so that out of anger I should lose patience in the face of their torments, and they could then use it as a pretext and make it the reason for their cruel aggression, and so conceal their lies. As a wondrous mark of Divine grace, I merely offer thanks in patience and I am resolved to continue to do so. Since we have submitted to Divine Determining and in accordance with the meaning of “The best of matters are the most difficult,” and we know these difficulties to be a Divine bounty through which we may gain greater merit; and since we have the absolutely certain conviction, at the degree of “absolute certainty,” that we have dedicated our lives to a truth more brilliant than the sun, as beautiful as Paradise and sweet as eternal happiness; certainly, knowing that we are carrying out this immaterial struggle in Allah’s way, proudly and offering thanks, despite the distressing conditions, we should not complain.¹²

When Bediuzzaman wrote this letter, he was under duress, old and of ill health, but he showed the morality of a true believer. He endured all the sufferings in patience, he believed that after hardship comes ease, and that all such hardship serves to earn for him a great reward. But he also considered the immediate spiritual rewards.

Obviously, these are all crucial secrets not known to those who conspired to have the believers imprisoned. As the following verse states, “... **They love what causes you distress. Hatred has appeared out of their mouths, but what their breasts hide is far worse. We have made the Signs clear to you if you use your intellect,**” (Surah Al ‘Imran, 118) the unbelievers wish to see the believers suffer hardship, but their cruelty only reinforced the motivation and optimism of the believers, when they consider the reward awaiting them in the Hereafter for their patience. The unbelievers do not understand that the believers know the secret of hoping for Allah’s reward. As, for instance, Bediuzzaman’s letter quoted above can only be correctly understood by those who know true patience, and believe that there is good in everything Allah ordains.

In the Qur’an, Allah reveals that the patient will be distinguished from those who are not. Times of hardship are ordained for this purpose, and through such instances, those who prove their patience also improve their character, and strengthen their drive for the cause of preaching the morality of the Qur’an. Again, this is a further opportunity for others to witness the superior morality of the believers. In Surah Al ‘Imran, Allah reveals that people are tried through such circumstances:

If you have received a wound, they have already received a similar wound. We deal out such days to people turn by turn, so that Allah will know those who believe and can gather martyrs from among you—Allah does not love wrongdoers—and so that Allah can purge those who believe and wipe out the disbelievers. Or did you imagine that you were going to enter the Garden without Allah knowing those among you who had struggled and knowing the steadfast? (Surah Al ‘Imran, 140-142)

Allah reveals in the Qur’an that He loves those who are patient and that He will reward them. For a believer confined in the School of Yusuf, there is nothing better than the love of our Lord and the reward He promises:

What is with you runs out but what is with Allah goes on for ever. Those who were steadfast will be recompensed according to the best of what they did. (Surat an-Nahl, 96)

The Spiritual Development That Results From Hardship

The hardship and suffering endured by believers in this world are important instances for them, because their lot in the Hereafter will be determined according to their responses to it. Times of hardship are the instances when believers may be distinguished from unbelievers. Many say that they are Muslims, that they believe in Allah and Judgment Day, and that they obey the Qur’an, but the majority of them turn away when they are faced with hardship in the cause of Allah. For instance, one who is concerned about his business will give it all his time, and spares no time to teaching the morality of the Qur’an. Or, they side with the Muslims when times are good, but desert them when the slightest adversity strikes. For example, when the non-religious make false accusations or launch physical attacks on the Muslims, these treacherous people suddenly become more concerned about their status in society and for their future. Thus, they will have shown forth the insincerity in their belief. If such hardship had not occurred, they could have persisted among Muslims for the rest of their lives, while their true character would only have been identified in the Hereafter. However, through hardship, the pure are distinguished from the impure, as a mercy of Allah:

What assailed you on the day the two armies met was by Allah’s permission, so that He would know the believers, and so that He would know the hypocrites... (Surah Al ‘Imran, 166-167)

The corrupt become deserters in times of adversity, and Allah’s grace is showered on those who remain steadfast and patient. Great blessing and much good come to believers through every hardship they endure in patience, such as School of Yusuf. The treatment one is exposed to, the living conditions, and the separation from one’s loved-ones and other believers, are examples of the trials they must endure. Every difficulty they are exposed to strengthens their character, and each time they conduct themselves nobly, they feel closer to Allah’s good pleasure, mercy and Paradise. Allah promises Paradise in the Qur’an to every believer who proves his patience in hardship. Allah reveals:

Or did you suppose that you would enter the Garden without facing the same as those who came before you? Poverty and illness afflicted them and they were shaken to the point that the Messenger and those who believed with him said, “When is Allah’s help coming?” Be assured that Allah’s help is very near. (Surat al-Baqara, 214)

Hardship And Suffering Strengthen Morality

Those who have experienced hardship, both mental and physical, are usually more considerate and of better understanding than others who haven’t. For instance, one who has grown up in poverty, better appreciates the things he possesses later on in life, and is grateful to Allah. He is more humble, gentle and accommodating, because of the hardship he had to endure, and does not use force or assail others, but is considerate, respectful and known for his better qualities. He is not wasteful, not even with the property of others, is not prone to vanity, but is hardworking, disciplined, and knows to be content with little.

The above-mentioned qualities earn the love and respect of all decent people. Others are especially touched by his consideration. For instance, when he meets a poor person, he instantly recognizes him by his mannerism and behavior, even if that person tries to conceal his poverty, and helps him without letting him feel it and hurting his dignity.

In short, one of the most important benefits of having to endure hardship and suffering is moral maturity. Others, on the other hand, devoid of these qualities, cannot bear hardship, not even for a cause they genuinely believe in. They are only concerned with their needs and living a life of luxury, and cannot persevere to defend what they believe in. They desert their cause at the first threat to their well-being. For this reason, the ability to endure hardship is a superior quality. However it must also be stated that it is nevertheless possible for those who have grown up in better circumstances to attain moral maturity by relying on conscience and intellect. The examples given here are for the purpose of describing common differences between people who grew up in poverty and those who haven’t.

The hardships of the School of Yusuf are beneficial for the believer in that they reinforce their good character and enhance their level of maturity.

The Hardships Of The School of Yusuf Enhance One’s Appreciation For What He Has

The School of Yusuf is a place where many difficulties can be experienced at once. One is compelled for months, or even years, to live within the same 4 walls, being able to see only certain people, to endure harsh living conditions, such as cold or dampness, a poor quality of food, sharing space with other criminals, murderers, thieves and other unsavory characters, and general environment of discomfort and ill-ease. In addition, a believer’s life can be compounded by illness or financial problems, making it even more difficult to endure.

For one who has spent years under such circumstances, even a small improvement in living conditions can be a great source of happiness. A clean and bright cell is a gift of Allah for someone who has spent years in an unlit one. And cleanliness, healthy food, the company of good people, the ability to move freely outside, or even just a window, can evoke profound gratitude. One who has experienced such a trial will be much more grateful towards Allah for all that he has been granted than one who has not.

One of the most difficult trials to live in the School of Yusuf is the inability to be with other believers. For a believer, to be with other believers, to converse with them, to remember Allah with them, and to serve Allah's cause together with them, is that which is most enjoyable. But, being in the School of Yusuf separates believers from one another. This is a condition that requires the patience of the Muslims inside the prison, as well as those on the outside. However, this situation makes known to both parties their importance to one another, and helps them to understand that Allah has created believers as a gift to one another. Believers evidently love and respect each other before being confined in the School of Yusuf, but times of hardship and their separation are factors that enhance and strengthen their love and respect for one another. Under such conditions, seeing the face of another believer becomes a great source of happiness.

One of the problems encountered in the School of Yusuf by believers is lack of cleanliness. Bediuzzaman, when speaking of the difficulties of the School of Yusuf, mentioned his illness, old age, and the constraints upon him, because Muslims are as much physically hygienic people as they are spiritually pure. They are cleaner in their homes, in the food they eat, the cloths they wear and their bodies than anyone else. As they consider cleanliness as a form of worship, even in the worst conditions, they are strict in this respect. For instance, as for the Companions of the Cave, whose narrative is related in Surat al-Kahf of the Qur'an, when they woke up after years of sleep, sent one of their own to buy food, but told him also to make sure it was pure and clean (Surat al-Kahf, 19). In another verse, Allah reveals the following to Ibrahim (as):

And We located the position of the House for Ibrahim: "Do not associate anything with Me and purify My House for those who circle it, and those who stand and bow and prostrate." (Surat al-Hajj, 26)

For a believer, the place where he is is like a place of worship, even if it is prison. Because, wherever he may be, he turns to Allah, prays to and worships Him. For this reason, the place where he finds himself must be as clean as Allah commands.

Obviously, in the School of Yusuf, it will be harder to ensure this cleanness. Instead of plenty of warm or cold water from a tap, there may only be drops of water available, dripping out of a pipe. Clothing might be limited to two pieces, but they must be clean. Whatever the situation is, a believer will never complain. He will never consider it a hardship that he has to clean himself with a little water dripping from a pipe. He will consider even this minor detail as Allah's help and gift, and therefore remain positive. Allah is compassionate and merciful, and supports and aids His beloved servants under the most difficult conditions, sometimes in mysterious ways. A believer confined in the School of Yusuf will always acknowledge the beauty and good of that which He creates for him, and feel great contentment.

Many blessings go unnoticed or are taken for granted in times of prosperity. But for someone in the School of Yusuf, running water, a clean and airy room, good food, and the opportunity to be with believers at any time, are the good things one must be grateful for in this world. Because Bediuzzaman knew this secret, he frequently advised his students to recognize the good of hardship, and to be grateful instead of complaining.

Just as the cessation of pleasure causes pain, so does the cessation of pain give pleasure. Yes, on thinking of past happy, enjoyable days, everyone feels a pang of regret and longing, and says: “Alas!,” and recalling calamitous, unhappy days of the past, experiences a sort of pleasure since they are passed, and says: “Praise and thanks be to Allah, that calamity has left its reward and departed.” He breathes a sigh of relief. That is to say, an hour’s temporary pain and sorrow leave behind a sort of pleasure in the spirit, while a pleasurable hour leaves a pain.

Since the reality is thus; and since past calamitous hours together with their pains are no longer existent, and future distressing days are at the present time non-existent, and there is no pain from nothing, to continually eat bread and drink water today, for example, because of the possibility of being hungry and thirsty in several days’ time, is most foolish. In just the same way, to think now of the past and future unhappy hours, which simply do not exist, and to display impatience, and ignoring one’s faulty self, to complain to Allah is also most foolish. So long as the power of patience is not scattered to left and right, that is, to the past and future, and is held firm in the face of the present hour and day, it is sufficient. The distress is reduced from ten to one.

In fact, but let it not be complaining, Divine favor pointed out the above fact to me while, during a few days of material and spiritual affliction, illness and trial the like of which I had never before experienced in my life, I was being crushed in particular by the despair and distress of the heart and spirit which resulted from my being unable to serve the *Risale-i Nur*. I was then content with my distressing illness and imprisonment. For, saying: “It is great profit for an unfortunate like myself who waits at the door of the grave to make one hour which might be passed in heedlessness ten hours’ worth of worship,” I gave thanks.¹³

The Value Of Worship Through Hardship

Bediuzzaman often stated that worship during time spent in the School of Yusuf is valuable for the Hereafter. This is good news for the believers confined there. Some of his comments on the subject are related below:

O you unfortunates who are experiencing the misfortune of prison! Since your world is weeping and your life is bitter, strive so that your Hereafter will not also weep, and your eternal life will smile and be sweet! Benefit from prison! Just as sometimes under severe conditions in the face of the enemy, an hour’s watch may be equivalent to a year’s worship, so in the severe conditions you are experiencing, the hardship of each hour spent as worship becomes the equivalent of many hours, it transforms that hardship into mercy.¹⁴

Each day spent in prison may gain as much as ten days’ worship, and, with regards to their fruits, may transform those transient hours into enduring hours, and through five or ten years’ punishment may be the means of saving a person from millions of years of eternal imprisonment. For the believers, the condition for gaining this most significant and valuable advantage is to perform the obligatory prayers, repent for the sins that were the cause of their imprisonment, and offer thanks in patience. For sure, prison is an obstacle to many sins; it does not provide the opportunity for them.¹⁵

As the words of Bediuzzaman reveal, the School of Yusuf is a source of contentment and enhanced motivation for believers. “A little endurance that can prevent eternal confinement” is in reality gift from Allah.

In the School of Yusuf, every act of worship will naturally be performed under more trying conditions. For instance, when Said Nursi was in prison, he had the *Risale-i Nur* written on matchboxes as paper was not permitted. This is surely a very difficult undertaking. Having these delivered to his friends on the outside to be transcribed was also very difficult. But considering the reward for such deeds, it becomes apparent that every difficulty is a road stretching to eternal good. Allah revealed: **“For truly with hardship comes ease; truly with hardship comes ease”** (Surat al-Inshirah, 5-6), thus informing believers that hardship is followed by ease.

The School of Yusuf Enhances Sincerity

One of the noblest qualities of a believer is his sincerity or in other words, that everything he does is done for the good pleasure of Allah. A sincere believer, knowing that he will have to account in the Hereafter for everything he does, behaves in a manner most pleasing to Allah, Who revealed this quality of the believers in the following verse:

We purified their sincerity through sincere remembrance of the Abode. (Surah Sad, 46)

In this verse, the word “purify” is used. Everything a believer does is only for the good pleasure of Allah. He has no other goal, or other to please. For instance, when helping the poor, a believer does so only to earn Allah’s good pleasure. He does not seek by it to gain respect in society, to win the approval of others, or to improve his reputation in the business community, whereas a non-religious person will usually do so with the view of winning enhanced status or because he can deduct his charitable contribution from his tax bill. Believers do good only for Allah, because only right actions done in sincerity have validity in the presence of Allah.

The School of Yusuf is a place that helps the believers to become more sincere in everything they do. The most profound impact exercised by the education received there is on one’s self. Because, there is no worldly gain for one in prison. Everything one does is behind closed doors, so there is no opportunity for ostentation. He cannot expect acclaim for his efforts, be they words spoken or acts of worship performed. Only Allah knows and sees what he does. Being that he knows this, he turns to Allah with a pure and genuine heart. Allah refers to such individuals in the Qur’an:

[E]xcept those who repent and put things right and hold fast to Allah and dedicate their religion to Allah alone; they are with the believers. Allah will give the believers an immense reward. (Surat an-Nisa’, 146)

Those who disbelieve say, “Why has a Sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?” Say: “Allah misguides whoever He wills and guides to Himself all who turn to Him: those who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace.” (Surat ar-Ra’d, 27-28)

As these verses reveal, one who turns to only Allah in everything he does, seeks to find refuge only with Him, and aims to earn only His good pleasure. Bediuzzaman saw the severance of the ties with the

outside world as one of the facets of the wisdom inherent in the School of Yusuf, and one which leads to the proper understanding of devotion:

My dear, loyal brothers! ... Nevertheless, Divine Determining drove us here for our own good; it called us again to the “School of Joseph,” where, being far more meritorious than the places of ordeal of former times, we could receive a thorough lesson in sincerity and rectify our attachment to the affairs of this world, which in truth are valueless.¹⁶

In yet another reflection, he explains that those who witness the hardship of the School of Yusuf attain true sincerity, and transcend all worldly or selfish interest:

Yes, since in the “School of Joseph” they have seen with their own eyes the ten and perhaps a hundred benefits gained for every hardship and difficulty, and the good results, and the extensive and sincere service to belief, they are successful in attaining pure sincerity, and no longer lower themselves by seeking minor, personal benefits.¹⁷

Believers In The School Of Yusuf Turn And Pray To Allah With A Pure Heart

Believers know that their only true friend, helper and Lord, is Allah. Throughout their lives, they turn only to Allah in everything they do, and seek only His help. The features that distinguish their prayers from that of others is the fact that they show gratitude in their prayer, whether or not they are praying in good or bad times.

Those of weak faith, and those sick at heart, usually pray only sincerely in times of hardship. It is only in those moments that their hearts are free of arrogance or doubt, and they pray to Allah with the recognition that only He can help them. For instance, during a devastating earthquake, all realize their powerlessness, and that only Allah’s help can save them. They therefore turn to Him with a pure heart. Believers, on the other hand, unlike these others, turn to Allah with a pure heart through a disaster, but also afterwards, when the danger has passed.

A believer confined in the School of Yusuf knows that it is only Allah Who can free him from prison, and that He is the best of judges, and therefore asks only for His help. He too will do what he can to attain his freedom, as did Yusuf (as) when he asked his friend to mention him to his master, but with the difference being that he knows it is Allah Who determines the outcome of all things. When Yusuf (as) was confronted with the conspiracy of the unbelievers, he prayed to Allah, Who answered his prayers:

He [Yusuf] said, “My Lord, the prison is preferable to me than what they call on me to do. Unless You turn their guile away from me, it may well be that I will fall for them and so become a man of ignorance.” His Lord replied to him and turned away from him their female guile and deviousness. He is the One Who Hears, the One Who Knows. (Surah Yusuf, 33-34)

The School Of Yusuf Is For The Believer A Retreat

Many Islamic scholars of the past spent time in retreat to withdraw from the world, to meditate deeply and with a pure heart on Allah, to reflect on the Qur’an, in order to attain a more profound spirituality, enlightenment and a perfected faith. Allah said to His Prophet (saas) in the Qur’an:

In the daytime much of your time is taken up by business matters. Remember the Name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him completely. (Surat al-Muzammil, 7-8)

As the verse book reveals, all have work to attend to during the day. For instance, a believer struggling in the cause of Allah may be busy with many things during the day, like teaching the morality of the Qur'an to others, working for the good of others, maintaining contact with other believers, as well as handling various other affairs. He may also be busy in trade. Nevertheless, he is always aware of Allah's presence, and does not violate His limits. However, in order to ponder the wonders of Allah's creation, reflect on truth of the Hereafter, Judgment Day, Hell and Paradise, and to read and uncover the wisdom and secrets of the Qur'an, one must transcend everyday affairs, concentrate one's mind and "devote oneself to Allah completely," as the verse prescribes. Throughout history, many Islamic scholars found it necessary to withdraw from the rest of society for certain periods of their lives, in order to deepen their knowledge of the Qur'an, to come closer to Allah, and to perfect their faith.

The Qur'an offers many examples of such retreats. For instance, a group of faithful sought refuge in a cave from the oppression of the unbelievers, and Allah covered them with His mercy. When our Prophet (saas) was forced out of Mecca, he too sought refuge in a cave. The Qur'an recounts this instance:

If you do not help him, Allah did help him when those who disbelieved drove him out and there were two of them in the Cave. He said to his companion, "Do not be despondent, Allah is with us." Then Allah sent down His serenity upon him and reinforced him with troops you could not see. He made the word of those who disbelieved undermost. It is the word of Allah which is uppermost. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. (Surat at-Tawba, 40)

As the above verse reveals, Allah helps all believers who live to earn His good pleasure, when they encounter much hardship in His cause. Where the unbelievers finally believe they have the upper hand, that is when the believers succeed, with the help of Allah. The unbelievers are left to wonder how it could have been possible, and to speculate as to what power could have aided the believers. Though, they are ignorant of the fact that Allah is the Muslims' sole aid.

Another group of believers who had sought refuge was the Companions of the Cave, as revealed in the Qur'an. The Companions of the Cave left a corrupt society mired in denial, and sought refuge in a cave where Allah spread over them His mercy. The following verses reveal this fact:

Do you consider that the Companions of the Cave and Ar-Raqim were one of the most remarkable of Our Signs? When the young men took refuge in the cave and said, "Our Lord, give us mercy directly from You and open the way for us to right guidance in our situation." So We sealed their ears with sleep in the cave for a number of years. (Surat al-Kahf, 9-11)

[One of them said,] "When you have separated yourselves from them and everything they worship except Allah, take refuge in the cave and your Lord will unfold His mercy to you and open the way to the best for you in your situation." (Surat al-Kahf, 16)

Allah gave freely of His mercy to the believers who sought refuge in the cave, and eased their burden. The Qur'an defines the cave as a place of good for believers. Islamic scholars have taken advantage of the austere conditions of caves to purify themselves from worldly passions.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi had intended in his youth to one day withdraw to a cave. Finally, when he had become a prisoner of war, during the First World War, he decided to withdraw to such a retreat if he were to be freed. Here he speaks of that desire:

When I was twenty years old I used to say repeatedly: "Towards the end of my life I shall withdraw from the life of society into a cave or onto a mountain like those who abandoned the world and withdrew into caves in olden times." And when during the former Great War I was being held as a prisoner in the north-east, I took this decision: "I shall spend my life after this in caves. I shall slip away from political and social life. Enough now of mixing in them." At that point both dominical grace and the justice of Divine Determining were manifested.¹⁸

Bediuzzaman stated repeatedly that his wish had come true, by the will and grace of Allah, but in another and better form, by his several terms spent in the School of Yusuf. In another instance, he points out the value of the School of Yusuf for the purpose of worship, and its suitability as a place of retreat:

If the prisoner has been sentenced unjustly, on condition he performs the obligatory prayers, each hour will be the equivalent of a day's worship, and the prison will be like a recluse's cell. He will be counted among the pious hermits of olden times who retired to caves in order to devote themselves to worship.¹⁹

In yet another instance, Bediuzzaman stated that his time spent in the School of Yusuf was like having withdrawn to a retreat, though that he hoped it would bring him even greater reward than an actual retreat:

It bestowed on me "Schools of Joseph" and places of solitary confinement where my time would not be wasted which were far superior to the mountain caves of ascetics and recluses. It gave both the benefits pertaining to the Hereafter of the cave, and strenuous service of the truths of belief and the Qur'an... In accordance with the verse, "But it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you." And the saying: "Good lies in what Allah chooses," out of compassion for my old age and in order to make us work harder in the service of belief, duties were given us outside our will and power in this third "School of Joseph."²⁰

As Bediuzzaman noted, retreat to a cave would be his capacity in his old age and ill health, while under such a condition a prison is more suited for retreat. Bediuzzaman was also punished with solitary confinement during those years. Even the windows of his cell were blacked out, in order to prevent him from seeing anyone. Others would consider this situation as a cruelty, but Bediuzzaman, as always, looked at it from the point of view of faith, and recognized instead the good inherent in it Allah made possible for him. Solitary confinement prevented him from seeing anyone, and thereby enabled him to expand his knowledge of the Qur'an, and to meditate without his attention being diverted. All these factors were recognized as positive by Bediuzzaman, and benefited him greatly.

During his imprisonment, he continued to serve in the cause of Allah, and dictated the fruits of his reflections, the *Risale-i Nur*, to his fellow students also in the prison. When he had completed his prison sentence, he sought to delay his release, and by the will of Allah, he returned to the School of Yusuf soon

after. As Bediuzzaman always maintained, there must have still been much good in the School of Yusuf for him since Allah kept him there.

Bediuzzaman likened the Nur students to the Companions of the Cave, and compared that they had made of the School of Yusuf a cave like that of the Companions. The meaning of this comparison is that the mercy of Allah which covered the Companions of the Cave, blessed the Nur students too. There where the unbelievers placed the believers to punish them, became instead the opportune place for the believers to improve themselves, where they were able to submit to Allah with ever greater faith, and where their hearts were infused with a stronger devotion and determination. The words of Bediuzzaman likening the School of Yusuf to situation of the Companions of the Cave's are as follows:

... and like the Companions of the Cave, the *Risale-i Nur* students turned that place of ordeal into a cave of the ascetics of former times; all this, together with their endeavors in writing out and disseminating the *Risale-i Nur* with easy hearts, proved that Divine grace had come to our aid.²¹

In yet another of his discussion, Bediuzzaman spoke of the visible aspects and of the true nature of things. He stated that he was driven to Barla, while in retreat in the cave, but that Barla became, by Allah's grace, a safer and better place of retreat for him:

Having given up politics and withdrawn from the world, I was living in a mountain cave and thinking of the Hereafter when "the worldly" wrongfully plucked me from it and sent me into exile. The All-Compassionate and Wise Creator turned the exile into mercy; He transformed the solitude on the mountain, which was unsafe and exposed to factors that would harm sincerity, into a retreat in the safe and sincere mountains of Barla. While a prisoner-of-war in Russia I formed the intention to withdraw into a cave towards the end of my life and offered supplications for that purpose. The Most Merciful of the Merciful made Barla the cave and bestowed the benefits of a cave, but He did not burden the difficulties and troubles of a cave on my weak being...

Moreover, although "the worldly" gave the document in question to all the exiles, and released the criminals from prison and offered them an amnesty, they wrongfully did not give it to me. In order to further employ me in the service of the Qur'an and make me write to a greater extent the lights of the Qur'an called the Words, my Compassionate Sustainer left me in untroubled manner in this exile and transformed it into a great instance of compassion.²²

Bediuzzaman's reflections are of utmost importance for a believer. Because, when considering matters according to their outward appearance, we would suppose that Bediuzzaman was exiled to Barla as an innocent man, and where, except a few relatives, he was not permitted to receive visitors or to write to them, and was prevented from working in the service of Allah. And, at a time when it was common to grant amnesty to murderers and other violent criminals, he was not pardoned.

These are the outward aspects of things. The reality, on the other hand, is that Bediuzzaman was taken from his retreat in the cave to Barla, a safer, healthier place for him. Allah used the hostility of certain people towards Bediuzzaman, and turned Barla into a retreat. These people's confinement of Bediuzzaman became the means by which he could not see anyone. In this way, as Bediuzzaman said too, "My All-Compassionate Creator transformed that isolation into a vast mercy for me. It left my mind clear and was the means of my receiving the effulgence of the All-Wise Qur'an as it is, free of all malice and ill-will."²³

Every believer confined in the School of Yusuf ought to consider this reality. Even though, at the first consideration, these events might appear as punishment for Bediuzzaman by his tormentors, in reality, Allah transported him into this “cave,” as a retreat, or into this “educational institution,” in order to ease his task by His mercy. Outwardly, it appears to be an injustice, while in actual fact Allah’s good pleasure and mercy is with the believers.

For that reason, Yusuf (as), instead of acquiescing to the conspiracy on the part of that woman and her circle of friends, declared that he preferred imprisonment, and prayed to Allah He save him from their schemes. Allah answered his prayer, and had him thrown into prison. Considering this situation as it really was, it is recognizable that prison, in this instance, was more appealing than the proposals of the unbelievers.

A believer confined in the School of Yusuf must contemplate the true reality of his situation, and act accordingly. Despite the outward appearance by which their enemies seem to have plotted against them, slandered and accused them wrongfully, believers know that their confinement in the School of Yusuf was ordained for even before they were born, or even before their parents. It was known, in the presence of Allah, in its every detail, when they would enter the School of Yusuf, which unbeliever would say what to them, when and under what circumstances they will be released, and what food they would eat there.

For one who considers his reality from this perspective, who acknowledges the truth of fate by submitting himself to Allah at all times, the conditions of the School of Yusuf are for his best interest.

A BELIEVER CONFINED IN THE SCHOOL OF YUSUF IS STUDENT AND TEACHER

A believer confined in the School of Yusuf is educated through the hardship he endures there, but he also educates those around him. Allah demands of believers that they command good and forbid evil. This is one of the most important duties upon the believer. He must teach others the morality of the Qur'an. In that way he leads others to the right path, that they may exchange their evil habits for ones more pleasing to Allah. He may also encourage them to perform their prayers, and remind them of the Hereafter. Allah declared, in the following verse, that He requires the presence of such a group among the believers in every era:

Let there be a community among you who call to the good, and enjoin the right, and forbid the wrong. They are the ones who have success. (Surah Al 'Imran, 104)

A believer confined in the School of Yusuf will fulfill this duty if he is disposed with the means to do so. The School of Yusuf is a place full of people who need to be warned of the Hereafter and to fear Allah. The great majority of the guilty there would not have been there if they had feared Allah and respected His limits. The only way to help them is to remind them to fear Allah, to serve Him, to be like those who abide by the morality of the Qur'an, who are gentle, peaceable, just, conscientious and compassionate. For this reason, a believer confined in the School of Yusuf, given that he has the opportunity to do so, must advise others according to the Qur'an, making the prison an "educational institution," where they learn morality. In this way, those who enter the prison as murderers, fraudsters or as violent criminals, can leave it as Muslims, who can hope for Paradise, Allah's good pleasure and compassion, who fear and respect Him, and who aim to do good for others.

It is the tradition set by Yusuf (as) that believers confined in the School of Yusuf call others to Allah's path. When Yusuf (as) was in prison, before interpreting the other prisoners' dreams, told them of Allah, His unity and religion. The relevant verses state the following:

Two servants entered prison along with him. One said, "I dreamt that I was pressing grapes." The other said, "I dreamt I carried bread upon my head and birds were eating it. Tell us the true meaning of these dreams. We see that you're one of the righteous." He said, "No meal to feed you will arrive before I have informed you what they mean. That is part of what my Lord taught me. For I have left the religion of a people who clearly have no faith in Allah and who refuse to acknowledge the truth of the world to come. I hold fast to the creed of my forebears Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. We don't associate anything with Allah. And that is how Allah has favored us and all mankind, but most do not give thanks. My fellow-prisoners, are many lords better, or Allah, the only One, the Conqueror? What you serve apart from Him are only names which you and your forefathers have made up. There is no mandate for them from Allah. Allah alone is qualified to judge. His order is to worship none but Him. That is in truth the straight and upright religion, but

most of mankind simply do not know.” (Surah Yusuf, 36-40)

Bediuzzaman taught his students and other inmates the *Risale-i Nur* throughout his term in prison. In essence, they were students twice, as they received an education provided by the rigors, but also benefited from their master Said Nursi’s superior knowledge, by spending day and night with him. They were educated with Bediuzzaman’s subtle reflections, and benefited from the example of his good morality. Therefore, the education received by the Nur students, who served time with their master, was profound and benefited them towards maturing their faith and exemplary behavior.

Wherever believers go, they foster order, security, contentment and beauty. A believer’s superior morality and exemplary behavior diffuse, like electric currents, and influence all around them. Even if they were not to say a word, their behavior, demeanor, modesty, sincerity, lack of selfish ambition, their positive attitude, energy, optimism and congeniality, would nevertheless make an impact on others. For instance, if one who complains and is in despair because of his imprisonment hears a believer expounding on the countless benefits and wisdom of being in prison, that the true life is the life of the Hereafter, and therefore, that the losses suffered on Earth are inconsequential, he would ponder his message and possibly react positively and reform his behavior. A believer, who ever keeps the smile on his face, even under the most adverse conditions, who is always submissive and grateful to Allah, and in whom other believers and inmates recognize his contentment, will have a positive effect. Those who become angry, even at the slightest problem, will then be ashamed, and will improve on themselves.

A believer tries to do good for others, and tries to educate others to respect Allah’s limits. For instance, ideological movements that seek to create disorder, terror and anarchy, he refutes according to the Qur’an. The *Nur* efforts, in this respect, under Bediuzzaman’s leadership, are an example of this in recent history. Bediuzzaman always stated that it is irreligious movements, like materialistic ideologies, which cause anarchy, and initiated a highly effective campaign to counter them. For this reason, the *Risale-i Nur* students are known for their efforts in advancing the cause of Islam and establishing public order. Their efforts continued while in prison, and, particularly during their time in the Denizli prison, they helped all other inmates to become believers and accept the morality of the Qur’an. Bediuzzaman stated the following in this regard:

Yes, through the strength of certain, verified belief, in every part of this country the *Risale-i Nur* and its students halt the awesome corruption and efforts of anarchy to destroy public order under the veil of communism. They work to maintain public order and security so that these twenty years three or four related courts and the police of ten provinces have not been able to find or record any incidents involving the infringement of public order connected with the *Risale-i Nur* students, who are very numerous and found in every part of the country. And the fair-minded police of three provinces stated: “The *Risale-i Nur* students are moral police. They assist us in preserving public order. Through certain, verified belief, they leave in everyone’s head who reads the *Risale-i Nur* something that restrains them from committing misdemeanors. They work to maintain public order.”

An example of this was Denizli Prison. When the *Risale-i Nur* entered there and the Fruits of Belief was written for the prisoners, within a space of three or four months more than two hundred of those prisoners became so extraordinarily obedient and acquired such religious and righteous conduct that a

man who had murdered three or four people held back from even killing bedbugs. They became completely compassionate, harmless members of the nation. The officials were astonished at this situation and looked on in appreciation. Some youths even said before receiving their sentences: "If the *Nurjús* remain in prison, we shall try to have ourselves convicted so that we can be taught by them and become like them. We shall reform ourselves through their instruction."

So those who accuse the *Risale-i Nur* students, who are thus, of disturbing public order are surely seriously deceived, or have been fooled, or knowingly or unknowingly are deceiving the government on account of anarchy, and try to crush and repress us.²⁴

In another instance, Bediuzzaman said that the *Nur* students taught by their manner and behavior, as they were forbidden to speak with others, and offered to teach the other inmates the morality of the Qur'an:

One reason for the justice of Divine Determining driving us to the Denizli School of Joseph is both its prisoners, and its people, and perhaps also its officials and judiciary being in greater need of the *Risale-i Nur* and its students than people anywhere else. It is because of this that we have been put to this arduous test, with a task pertaining to belief and the Hereafter. Only one or two prisoners out of twenty to thirty performed the obligatory prayers as they should be performed; but following the *Risale-i Nur* students, forty to fifty without exception have begun to perform them perfectly; this is such instruction and guidance through the tongue of disposition and action, that it reduces to nothing the distress and hardship; indeed, it makes one love it. We hope from Divine mercy and grace that just as the students have taught this through their actions, so through the powerful true belief in their hearts, they will become like a fortress of steel, delivering the believers from the doubts and suspicions of the people of misguidance.

The worldly here preventing us from speaking and having contact causes no harm. The tongue of disposition is more powerful and effective than verbal speech. Since imprisonment is for training and education, if they love the nation, they should allow the prisoners to meet with the *Risale-i Nur* students so that in one month or even a day, they may receive more training and education than they would otherwise receive in a year, and may all become persons beneficial both to the nation and country, and useful for their own futures and their lives in the Hereafter...²⁵

In a number of instances, Bediuzzaman addressed the inmates directly, calling them onto the path of Allah, to quit their bad habits, and to become as forgiving of others as believers are to be. Bediuzzaman stated, in the following passage, that one aspect of the wisdom behind their imprisonment could be to educate these inmates according to the *Risale-i Nur*:

My loyal new brothers and old prisoners!

I have formed the firm conclusion that, in respect of Divine favor, you are an important cause in our entering here. That is to say, with its consolation and the truths of belief, the *Risale-i Nur* is to save both you from the distress of this calamity of prison and from much worldly harm, and your life from passing profitlessly and in vain through grief and sorrow and being wasted on the winds of fancy, and your Hereafter from weeping like your world is weeping now; it is to provide you with true solace.

Since the reality of the matter is this, of course you must be brothers to one another, like the Denizli prisoners and Students of the *Risale-i Nur*. You can see that they examine all your possessions, food, bread, and soup which come from outside so that a knife does not get in among you and you do not attack one another.

The warders who faithfully serve you suffer much trouble. Also, you do not go out to exercise together, as though you were going to attack one another like wild beasts. And so, new friends, who are by nature bold and courageous, with great moral courage you should say to the group at this time:

“If not knives, but Mausers and revolvers were given us, and the order to fire as well, we would not hurt our friends who are unfortunate and suffering this calamity like ourselves. Through the guidance and at the command of the Qur’an, and belief, and Islamic brotherhood, and our interests, we have decided to forgive them and to try not to offend them, even if formerly there were a hundred reasons for our enmity and hostility.” And so transform this prison into an auspicious place of study.²⁶

Bediuzzaman said:

My friends who are studying together with me in this School of Joseph! Since the reality is this and the *Risale-i Nur* proves it so clearly and decisively, like sunlight, that for twenty years it has broken the obstinacy of the obdurate and brought them to believe; we should therefore follow the way of belief and right conduct, which is easy and safe and beneficial for both our own worlds, and our futures, and our lives in the Hereafter, and our country and nation; and spend our free time reciting the suras of the Qur’an that we know instead of indulging in distressing fancies, and learn the meaning from friends who teach them; and make up for the prayers we have failed to perform in the past, when we should have done; and taking advantage of one another’s good qualities, transform this prison into a blessed garden raising the seedlings of good character. With good deeds like these, we should do our best to make the prison governor and those concerned not torturers like the Guards of Hell standing over criminals and murderers, but righteous masters and kindly guards charged with the duties of raising people for Paradise in the School of Joseph and supervising their training and education.²⁷

Bediuzzaman also informed the prison warden in writing that the inmates must be educated in order for them to adopt the morality of the Qur’an, and sought his permission to do so, because, as he argued, the only power that can prevent these people, who can commit a crime without feeling the slightest guilt, from reoffending after their release is the fear of Allah. One who fears and loves Allah, and seeks His good pleasure, will not do something that He does not approve of. Bediuzzaman was aware of this fact, and he turned every prison he was sent to into an “educational institution,” in which hundreds met with faith, and where his followers were teachers as well as students there.

It is surprising that this man, who worked even in prison for the good of Islam, even under the harshest conditions, forsaking his own well-being, striving day and night, was slandered and even portrayed for much of his life as an enemy of the state.

It must not be forgotten that a similar fate was met by many devout Muslims throughout history. However, Allah always turned the circumstance to the benefit of the believers, and tying the hands of the unbelievers who sought to harm them, rewarded them manifold for every evil that was done onto them in life as well as the Hereafter. He saved His sincere servants who had been slandered and made to suffer, and granted them great spiritual as well as material rewards. Though, the greatest reward for believers is Allah’s mercy and Paradise.

BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI: THE GREAT SCHOLAR OF ISLAM WHO LEARNED AND TAUGHT IN THE SCHOOL OF YUSUF

Throughout history, Muslims were punished with imprisonment by the unbelievers for their good works in the cause of Allah, and for teaching that He is the only Lord. Somehow, breaking the law was not the reason for their imprisonment. Those who fear that Muslims might spread good morality among the people, and that, thereby, their evil might become exposed, and their personal ambitions placed in jeopardy, have always slandered the believers, and provoked the public and justice establishment against them.

Similar circumstances repeated themselves throughout Bediuzzaman's life. He and his students have always been falsely accused, even though they merely worked tirelessly to teach the morality of the Qur'an, without political ambitions or for seeking status, but calling people to the kind of peace and contentment contrary to the irreligious ideas that were being propagated, and always fighting against those who sought to inhibit the spread of the morality of Islam. As a result, they were investigated and imprisoned. In each instance, their innocence was established. Nevertheless, in the meantime, the prisons they were kept in became schools as they had been for Yusuf (as), and their sincerity, love for one another, and determination were enhanced and strengthened.

The treatment Bediuzzaman was exposed to, and the accusations he was assailed with, were the fulfillment of the verses of the Qur'an. Even if his life is only briefly examined, it becomes apparent that he experienced circumstances similar to the sincere believers had, as revealed in the Qur'an, and that he responded with a level of morality much like them. For this reason, it will be of benefit to consider his life.

The Life Of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

Said Nursi is one of the greatest Islamic scholars and thinkers of recent times. He was born in 1873 in the Nurs village, of the Hizan district in Bitlis, and he died in 1960, in Sanliurfa.

He acquired advanced knowledge of the sciences, as well as religious insight, when he was still young, and he was noticed for his sharp mind, strong memory, and superior abilities at an early age. He began to be called Bediuzzaman for these qualities, meaning "the beauty of the age."

He never shied from any effort to exemplify the morality of the Qur'an, which is why he was constantly slandered and oppressed by the Masons and other enemies of Islam.

He came to Istanbul in the year 1907, in order to solve what he considered to be the urgent problem of education in the east, by lobbying the authorities for the foundation of a university, which he called Medresetü'z-Zehra, where religious as well as modern sciences would be taught. His profound knowledge gained him the scientific community's recognition here within a short period of time. He published articles in various newspapers and magazines, and participated in the Liberation constitutionalism arguments of the time. He played a pacifying role in March 31 rebellion of 1909, but was arrested by order of the state of emergency courts, as a consequence of false allegations, and was freed in due course.

Following these events, he returned to the east and formed a militia with his students during the First World War. Bediuzzaman was taken prisoner of war in Siberia, and after 3 years in captivity, he escaped and returned to Istanbul via Leningrad, Warsaw, Vienna and Sofia.

In Istanbul, he was received with great respect by the scientific community and by government officials. He was appointed to the office of Dar al Hikmat-al Islamiya, and from the income he earned, he published his books, and distributed them free of charge. During the occupation of Istanbul, he published a pamphlet called *Hutuvat-ı Sitte* warning of the occupying forces' true intentions. He rejected the Fatwa by the Sheikh al-Islam, obtained under duress, and to the effect that the uprising in Anatolia was an unlawful rebellion, and instead defended and supported it. His attitude won the approval of the national assembly formed in Anatolia, after which he was invited to Ankara.

When he arrived in Ankara in 1922, he was received with an official state ceremony. He was offered the posts of minister for religious affairs, Member of Parliament, and preacher for the eastern regions, but he rejected all such offers. When he realized the hostility of some members of parliament towards Islam, he presented to and read out his 10 articles in parliament.

When the Sheikh Said uprising was taking place, during the time of his retreat in a cave in Van, he was arrested and taken first to Burdur, and then to Barla, a district of Isparta, even though he was in no way involved in the plot. There, he began to write his books, which sold a total of 600,000 copies. Until the end of his life, he was persecuted by those who disapproved of his ideas, and was taken to court in 1935 in Eskishehir, in 1943 in Denizli, in 1947 in Afyon, and in 1952 in Istanbul. He was also kept under house arrest in Kastamonu and Emirdag. He spent 30 years of his life in prison or exile, and strove to complete his master work *Risale-i Nur*, under these circumstances. He completed the work, the best Tafsir (Commentary) of his era, in 1952. Following the case brought against him in the Denizli courts, which lasted 8 years, the *Risale-i Nur* was examined by the advisory commission of the ministry of religious affairs, which concluded that it was a work of faith, and sanctioned its publication. He was therefore found not guilty of the charges. After his release, the *Risale-i Nur* was published in the new alphabet by the Democratic Party's Member of Parliament for Isparta, Tahsin Tola, by the order of Adnan Menderes. His life of 87 years, spent in the cause of Islam, ended in the 1960.

The fact that Bediuzzaman spent a major part of his life either in prison, exile or house arrest, proves the determination and patience of his students. They had dedicated themselves to the service of Islam, and yet were always accused by certain segments of power of trying to undermine the state. These segments tried to discredit them in the public eye through slanderous accusations, though they had only been working of the good of Islam. For instance, these segments, in control of some media and other means of access to power, accused Said Nursi and his students of forming secret religious organizations, of fighting against the regime, and of trying to destroy the republic's core values. Consequently, Said Nursi and 120 of his followers were apprehended and, according to some journalists of the era, "bundled handcuffed into trucks as if they had started a revolution," taken to the Eskishehir High Criminal Court.

It must be stated at this point that throughout these proceedings, the Turkish police and the army acted sympathetically towards Bediuzzaman and his Nur students. Through the provocation by some irreligious groups, however, they were forced to do their duty, but without failing to state that they are on the side of truth. For instance, the commander of the military unit that was ordered to transport

Bediuzzaman and 120 of his followers to Eskishehir, on the way allowed them to do their daily prayers, removing their handcuffs for this purpose.

Another Islamic thinker, Necip Fazil Kisakurek wrote the following about the apprehension of Bediuzzaman and the Nur students:

Despite that in the raid everything of relevance belonging to Bediuzzaman and his followers was secured, there is nothing that would indict them. Even so, they did not free them but sent him with 15 of his followers to prison as if a consolation to a charge that warranted the death penalty... 105 students are found not guilty.²⁸

The Eskishehir court convicted Bediuzzaman and sentenced him to 11 months in prison. During his term in the Eskishehir prison, Bediuzzaman endured a very difficult time. He was punished with one month solitary confinement, and was exposed to many other cruel practices, some of which are related by various sources as follows:

Said Nursi was in the Eskishehir prison with 120 of his followers where he was taken into solitary confinement and he and his students were subjected to various forms of cruelty and torture. One of his students, Zubeyir Gunduzalp states that they were not given food for 12 days.²⁹

They were looking at us as if we had already been sentenced to the death penalty. No visitors were allowed, saying that anyone who spoke to us would be sentenced to death as well and at night it was not possible to find sleep because of the filth, cockroaches and bedbugs.³⁰

When Bediuzzaman was released from the Eskishehir prison, he was held under house arrest, in a house opposite the police station in Kastamonu. Eight years later, the Denizli court sentenced him to 20 months in prison, and he was then exiled to Emirdag.

Throughout this period, he was subjected to countless instances of torture and cruelty, and poisoned more than once. Bediuzzaman, who was by then suffering from old age and ill-health, was deliberately kept in cold, damp and poorly ventilated cells. Said Nursi relates his prison days as follows:

Then they arrested me during the most intensely cold days of winter on some trite pretext, and put me into solitary confinement in prison in a large and extremely cold ward, leaving me two days without a stove. Having been accustomed to light my stove several times a day in my small room, always having live coals in the brazier, with my illness and weakness I was only able to endure it with difficulty.³¹

Bediuzzaman continues by saying that, as we related in the previous chapter, he found consolation in the thought of seeing other inmates entering the Islamic faith.

Allegations Against Bediuzzaman

Certain segments of power that disliked the idea of spiritual values gaining in popularity, used the same age-old tactics against Said Nursi, and incited the public, as well as the authorities, against him and his followers, through a comprehensive smear campaign. Various newspapers of the era waged a propaganda war against him and his students by printing untrue stories. Some individuals were bought with money to offer false evidence against them. However, each time the courts found Bediuzzaman and his students not guilty of the charges brought against them, those who concocted these ill-conceived slanderous charges were humiliated in public.

When these slanderous accusations are examined, it becomes clear that they are much like those

assailed against the believers of the past, such as “he is abusing religion for personal gain,” “he is misleading people,” “he is corrupt,” “he is mad,” “those who believe him are naïve.” These are just some of the accusations brought wrongly against the believers as pointed out in the Qur’an.

In the past, every believer encountered the opposition of his community’s leading personalities, as every believer will encounter such opposition in the future. As the following verse of the Qur’an reveals, **“We never sent a warner into any city without the affluent people in it saying, ‘We reject what you have been sent with.’”** (Surah Saba’, 34). This is Allah’s unchanging law and encountering such opposition is proof for believers of being on the right path. The fact that Bediuzzaman and his students were confronted by the same accusation and slanders that the Qur’an speaks of shows that they followed the right path and that their efforts were effective. All believers who work for the cause of the morality of the Qur’an will encounter such accusations. Allah reveals this reality in the following way:

Or did you suppose that you would enter the Garden without facing the same as those who came before you? ... (Surat al-Baqara, 214)

Truly, a matter which needs to be considered by all Muslims, is that prophets and believers in the past repeatedly experienced cruelty and false accusations. For this reason, it will be beneficial for Muslims to consider the numerous attacks, conspiracies and accusations Bediuzzaman was exposed to in light of verses of the Qur’an.

Slander Against Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: Abusing Religion For The Purpose Of Personal Gain

One of the gravest accusations assailed against Bediuzzaman was that he sought to obtain material gain or prestige from his activities. Bediuzzaman was accused of fleecing his students, and that he was seeking to satisfy his leadership complex, though he lived a simple and modest life, owned no property, and in his own words, it was his chosen profession to be dissatisfied with himself. We see in the verses of the Qur’an that believers encountered similar accusations in the past:

The ruling circle of those of his [Nuh’s] people who disbelieved said, “This is nothing but a human being like yourselves who simply wants to gain ascendancy over you...” (Surat al-Muminun, 24)

They said [to Musa], “Have you come to us to turn us from what we found our fathers doing, and to gain greatness in the land? We do not believe you.” (Surah Yunus, 78)

Bediuzzaman’s exemplary life and the works he left behind would suggest that these accusations were invented and wholly unfounded.

Bediuzzaman’s Followers Were Belittled

A propaganda campaign was launched against the students of Bediuzzaman, who had listened to

him and tried to learn from him. Those who accused them of being naïve, stupid and blind followers of him, showed that they shared the same ill-intent as unbelievers of the past. The Qur'an reveals that the unbelievers responded with the following to those who called them onto the right path:

The ruling circle of those of his [Nuh's] people who disbelieved said, "We do not see you as anything but a human being like ourselves. We do not see anyone following you but the lowest of us, unthinkingly. We do not see you as superior to us. On the contrary, we consider you to be liars." (Surah Hud, 27)

When they are told, "Believe in the way that the people believe," they say, "What! Are we to believe in the way that fools believe?" No indeed! They are the fools, but they do not know it. (Surat al-Baqara, 13)

Accusation of Madness

One of fiercest accusations believers had to face in history was that of madness. Bediuzzaman, who worked for the spread of the Islamic morality, was accused many times of the same. The following are some verses in this regard:

He said, "This Messenger, who has been sent to you, is mad." (Surat ash-Shu'ara', 27)

Before them the people of Nuh denied the truth. They denied Our servant, saying, "He is madman," and he was driven away with jeers. (Surat al-Qamar, 9)

The example of this in Bediuzzaman's life took place in 1908, when he was taken to the Yildiz military court, for contesting religious subjects, and where a commission of five doctors, 2 Jewish, 1 Greek, 1 Armenian, 1 Turkish, certified him insane. Subsequently, he was sent to a mental hospital where, following his examination, the psychiatrist said: "if this man is mad, then there are no sane people in the world."³²

Bediuzzaman was later frequently alleged to be insane by the media, then under the influence of certain circles. However, everyone who knew him, friend or foe, knew him to be a great scholar, and a man of intelligence, insight and sincerity. The great masterwork on matters of faith and truth of the Qur'an he left behind confirms his true state of mind.

The Allegation That He Was Misleading His Followers

Those far from the religious morality have always accused believers of misleading those they call to the right path. Even though they themselves have gone astray, they accuse those who abide by Allah's book, demonstrating that it is with the religion itself that they are at war. Allah had revealed:

They said, “These two magicians desire by their magic to expel you from your land and abolish your most excellent way of life.” (Surah Ta-Ha, 63)

Accusation Of Heresy

One of the allegations against Bediuzzaman was that he was promoting a religion other than Islam and that he had invented his own religion. The purpose behind these allegations was to incite the public and religious but ignorant people against him. The verses of the Qur'an reveal that the same allegations were made against believers in the past:

The ruling circle of his [Nuh's] people said, “We see you in flagrant error.” (Surat al-A'raf, 60)

For this purpose, they misinterpreted some of Bediuzzaman's practices and exploited them in their propaganda war against him. Bediuzzaman writes, in one of his letters, that incited by a secret committee, some naïve Imams accused him of not attending the Friday prayers and not growing a beard.³³ In response to such provocations, Bediuzzaman always made the appropriate statements and his innocence was thus established.

Plots Against Bediuzzaman: Conspiracy And Slander

Nuh said, “My Lord, they have disobeyed me and followed those whose wealth and children have only increased them in loss.” They have hatched a mighty plot. (Surah Nuh, 21-22)

As the Prophet Nuh (as) states, the unbelievers offered every effort to hinder the believers. Conspiracies and slander are some of these which Bediuzzaman also had to deal with.

One of the conspiracies against him is related in the book titled, *Bilinmeyen Tarafıyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Bediuzzaman Said Nursi As We Don't Know Him). The book says that one of the conspirators wrote on a piece of paper “Said's servant bought Raki (an alcoholic drink) for him,” and attempted to collect signatures from the drunken people on this piece of paper in a store that sells alcohol,³⁴ to discredit Bediuzzaman in the Muslim community.

Bediuzzaman relates another example of slanderous attacks on him in one of his letters. According to a man who held public office, Bediuzzaman was partying all night long, consumed tray loads of Baklava (a Turkish dessert), and had prostitutes and dishonorable people frequent his place. Bediuzzaman responded:

“My door was locked from the inside as well the outside at nights and a guard was standing outside my door all night by the order of the evil man who slandered me.”³⁵

As we have seen, these people accused Bediuzzaman of drunkenness and womanizing, in order to discredit him in the eye of the public. However, it must not be forgotten that Allah reveals in the Qur'an that such conspiracies cannot harm the believers, and that all will conclude positively for them:

Those before them plotted but all plotting belongs to Allah. He knows what each self earns, and the disbelievers will soon know who has the Ultimate Abode. (Surat ar-Ra'd, 42)

Bediuzzaman was cleared of all these allegations, while those who slandered him were publicly humiliated.

His Exile

The ruling circle of those of his people who were arrogant said, "We will drive you out of our city, Shu'ayb, you and those who believe along with you, unless you return to our religion." He [Shu'ayb] said, "What, even though we detest it?" (Surat al-A'raf, 88)

They said, "Lut, if you do not desist you will be expelled." (Surat ash- Shu'ara', 167)

Allah reveals in many verses of the Qur'an, as the ones quoted above, that believers were forced into exile. Bediuzzaman was punished with exile on more than one occasion. Certain circles, like the Freemasons, that could not confront him on an ideological basis, found the solution in having him exiled to remote regions, such as Barla, Kastamonu, Emirdag and Isparta.

He was ordered to remote corners in towns and villages, he was kept under inhumane conditions, and he was forbidden to leave the village of his exile, in order to prevent contact with the outside world. Two days before his death, he arrived in Urfa quite ill, but still they sought to evict him from there nonetheless. With the intervention of his students, and other conscientious people, he was allowed to remain there, but he finally died.

Harassed by Hypocrites

One of the methods used to stop Bediuzzaman and his students was to have hypocrites infiltrate their community. It was the responsibility of these individuals to inform certain irreligious circles of what went on among them, and to provide material for propaganda by the media they controlled.

An example of this was the serial article "Inanc Somuruculeri" (Belief Exploitives) published in 1964 by the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*. Yilmaz Cetiner assumed a religious identity in order to infiltrate the Nur community. He was with Bediuzzaman on a number of occasions, and was to produce the most devastating smear campaign against the *Nur* community. Bediuzzaman speaks in the following way about a spy among them:

There was an evil spy among us who worked to have the students of Nur imprisoned. This man one day admitted freely that he had found nothing to secure their imprisonment and said if he were to find something he would most definitely have them imprisoned. Two days later, he himself did something that got him imprisoned for two years.³⁶

Bediuzzaman never compromised in his struggle, in spite of all the conspiracies, attacks and slander waged against him. What was done onto him and his students served only to strengthen their determination. As the Qur'an promised, the unbelievers' conspiracies were foiled. Allah states in these

verses that He will thwart the plots of the unbelievers:

They desire to extinguish Allah's Light with their mouths. But Allah refuses to do other than perfect His Light, even though the disbelievers detest it. It is He Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth to exalt it over every other religion, even though the idolaters detest it. (Surat at-Tawba, 32-33)

Our Word was given before to Our servants, the Messengers, that they would certainly be helped. (Surat as-Saffat, 171-172)

Bediuzzaman is one of the believers who were wronged like many before him. However, it must be acknowledged that, every injustice, every hardship, every hurtful word one would rather not hear, and every slander assailed against the believers, is ultimately in their favor. For as long as the believer remains patient and submissive to his Lord, his standing in Paradise will be improved. Allah has promised victory on Earth to believers, and for this very reason, and regardless of how the unbelievers try otherwise, their efforts will come to naught, and return upon them in the form of suffering in Hell.

Other than Bediuzzaman, Islamic scholars like Imam-i A'zam, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal were sent to the School of Yusuf, subjected to suffering, cruelty and even torture, and attempts were made to inhibit them such as arrest and exile. Bediuzzaman stated the following about Islamic scholars who defied hardship in the School of Yusuf:

It also occurred to my heart that since a great interpreter of the Law like Imam-i A'zam had suffered imprisonment; and a supreme mujahid like Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal had been severely tortured in prison for the sake of a single matter of the Qur'an, and had endured it in perfect patience, not remaining silent about the matter in question; and numerous religious leaders and scholars had been completely patient and unshaken, offering thanks, despite suffering torments far greater than yours; for sure you are obliged to offer endless thanks for the very few difficulties you suffer, although the reward and gain you receive is great for those many truths of the Qur'an.³⁷

CONCLUSION

In this book, we have dealt with the superior morality of believers who lived for Allah's good pleasure, mercy and Paradise, and suffered much cruelty and hardship in this cause. When we consider the lives of the prophets and sincere believers mentioned in the Qur'an, we find them confronted with intense struggles, continued threats of death, imprisonment, or forced exile from their homes and nations, slanderous attacks, and mockery. It is all because they obeyed Allah's commandments. And, they not only lived by the morality of the religion, but also taught, as best as it was possible, this same truth to others. As a consequence of their sincere and concerted efforts, many people entered faith, but still others became hostile, and thus they were often forced to live a life marked by much hardship.

Those who could not bear this hardship, who could not abide by the good morality taught by the prophets, and who hadn't the patience required by Islam, became those who went astray, exchanging the Hereafter for this world.

There is a reality that must not be disregarded: Allah ordains all hardship in order to distinguish the good from the evil, the pure from the impure, the genuine from the insincere, and the faithful from the irreligious. Those who maintain good conduct pleasing to Allah through hardship are Allah's friends, whom He rewards with His help and support, on Earth as well as in the Hereafter. As Allah says in one of His verses, "with hardship comes ease."

Also, the Prophet Muhammad (saas) informed believers that patience is a great blessing:

... And whoever remains patient, Allah will make him patient. Nobody can be given a blessing better and greater than patience. (Sahih Bukhari)

In addition, Allah revealed that he will foil the plots against the believers, that those who scheme against them will be defeated, and that ultimately the unbelievers cannot harm the believers. The following are some examples of the verses in this regard:

.... Allah will not give the disbelievers any way against the believers. (Surat an-Nisa', 141)

When those who disbelieve were plotting against you to imprison you or kill you or expel you: they were plotting and Allah was plotting, but Allah is the Best of Plotters. (Surat al-Anfal, 30)

The hardship suffered by believers has always been followed by good and prosperity. For instance, when Yusuf (as) was released from prison, he was appointed to administer the treasury of Egypt. After destroying the nations that tyrannized Nuh (as) and the other believers, Allah settled them on fertile ground. Pharaoh, who sought to annihilate Musa (as) and his people through torture and cruelty, perished himself in the sea. The Prophet Muhammad (saas) and the believers were forced to migrate when the threats to their lives and conspiracies against them reached intolerable levels, but then Allah covered them with His mercy, the Muslims gained strength and defeated the alliance of evil.

Allah will reward everyone in return for their deeds, and will certainly give victory to the believers. However, the true reward is the eternal life of the Hereafter. Every human being will eventually die.

Everyone will meet the angel of death before he expects him, and at that moment, will see the true reality that had been clearly revealed. Everyone must know that those who settle for this world, who seek to evade hardship, seek indulgence, prefer their selfish desires over Allah's good pleasure, and desert their religion for fear of jeopardizing their well-being, will ultimately fail to enjoy the pleasure that they had been seeking. None will be able to say, "thankfully, I have pursued pleasure and personal gain, and have succeeded." Worse, what they have done will cause them indescribable torment. Allah reveals the unbelievers' remorse in the Hereafter:

If only you could see when they are standing before the Fire and saying, "Oh! If only we could be sent back again, we would not deny the Signs of our Lord and we would be among the believers." (Surat al-An'am, 27)

But as for him who is given his Book in his left hand, he will say, "If only I had not been given my Book. And had not known about my Reckoning! If only death had really been the end! My wealth has been of no use to me. My power has vanished." (Surat al-Haqqa, 25-29)

A believer, on the other hand, who lived his life for Allah, who suffered cruelty most of his life, for not forsaking the good pleasure of Allah, who lived under the constant threat of death, who heard hurtful and mocking words, was slandered or even imprisoned, will feel great joy for all the hardship he endured throughout his life when he meets the angel of death. Better still, as we have been relating throughout this book, a believer experiences contentment and hope when he meets hardship, because he knows that all hardship leads to good, and that Allah will create ease and ultimate victory. He can also hope for great reward and manifold increase in return in the Hereafter, for all the hardship he had to suffer here on Earth. For this reason, unbelievers are surprised to see the believers' response to hardship, their good spirits, fortitude, because they do not know that believers hope for from their Lord what they cannot.

The School of Yusuf is, in this respect, an "institution" for their spiritual education, as well as the means to the good and beauty of the Hereafter. A believer, who enters the School of Yusuf, is glad because he can have greater hope for the good of Paradise if he successfully endures this trial.

As this book related, Muslims consider situations from a viewpoint that unbelievers cannot understand, discovering an inner-truth unbelievers can't. They are individuals who know the true meaning of hardship, cruelty and oppression, and live their lives accordingly. Therefore, it is not possible for one committed to evil to stop or prevent they who believe in Allah with a pure heart, fear only Him and love and befriend Him, who sincerely strive for true friendship, love, tolerance, hope, optimism, solidarity and morality. The unbelievers must know that, irrespective of what they do, even if they were to concentrate all their power, supporting one another, and devise schemes that could rock mountains, ultimately they cannot harm the believers. Every snare they set, or slander they devise, and every mocking word cast against the believers, serve only to bring ever greater reward to them on Earth, as well as the Hereafter (unless Allah wills otherwise). Allah offers the believers who are aware of this the following good news:

Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth in return for the Garden. They fight in the Way of Allah and they kill and are killed. It is a promise binding on Him in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an and who is truer to his contract than Allah? Rejoice then in the bargain you have made. That is the great victory. Those who repent, those who worship, those who praise, those who fast, those who bow, those who prostrate, those who command the right, those who forbid the wrong, those who preserve the limits of Allah: give good news to the believers. (Surat at-Tawba 111-112)

THE DECEPTION OF EVOLUTION

Darwinism, in other words the theory of evolution, was put forward with the aim of denying the fact of creation, but is in truth nothing but failed, unscientific nonsense. This theory, which claims that life emerged by chance from inanimate matter, was invalidated by the scientific evidence of clear "design" in the universe and in living things. In this way, science confirmed the fact that Allah created the universe and the living things in it. The propaganda carried out today in order to keep the theory of evolution alive is based solely on the distortion of the scientific facts, biased interpretation, and lies and falsehoods disguised as science.

Yet this propaganda cannot conceal the truth. The fact that the theory of evolution is the greatest deception in the history of science has been expressed more and more in the scientific world over the last 20-30 years. Research carried out after the 1980s in particular has revealed that the claims of Darwinism are totally unfounded, something that has been stated by a large number of scientists. In the United States in particular, many scientists from such different fields as biology, biochemistry and paleontology recognize the invalidity of Darwinism and employ the concept of intelligent design to account for the origin of life. This "intelligent design" is a scientific expression of the fact that Allah created all living things.

We have examined the collapse of the theory of evolution and the proofs of creation in great scientific detail in many of our works, and are still continuing to do so. Given the enormous importance of this subject, it will be of great benefit to summarize it here.

The Scientific Collapse Of Darwinism

Although this doctrine goes back as far as ancient Greece, the theory of evolution was advanced extensively in the nineteenth century. The most important development that made it the top topic of the world of science was Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859. In this book, he denied that Allah created different living species on Earth separately, for he claimed that all living beings had a common ancestor and had diversified over time through small changes. Darwin's theory was not based on any concrete scientific finding; as he also accepted, it was just an "assumption." Moreover, as Darwin confessed in the long chapter of his book titled "Difficulties of the Theory," the theory failed in the face of many critical questions.

Darwin invested all of his hopes in new scientific discoveries, which he expected to solve these difficulties. However, contrary to his expectations, scientific findings expanded the dimensions of these difficulties. The defeat of Darwinism in the face of science can be reviewed under three basic topics:

- 1) The theory cannot explain how life originated on Earth.
- 2) No scientific finding shows that the "evolutionary mechanisms" proposed by the theory have any evolutionary power at all.
- 3) The fossil record proves the exact opposite of what the theory suggests.

In this section, we will examine these three basic points in general outlines:

The First Insurmountable Step: The Origin Of Life

The theory of evolution posits that all living species evolved from a single living cell that emerged on the

primitive Earth 3.8 billion years ago. How a single cell could generate millions of complex living species and, if such an evolution really occurred, why traces of it cannot be observed in the fossil record are some of the questions that the theory cannot answer. However, first and foremost, we need to ask: How did this "first cell" originate?

Since the theory of evolution denies creation and any kind of supernatural intervention, it maintains that the "first cell" originated coincidentally within the laws of nature, without any design, plan or arrangement. According to the theory, inanimate matter must have produced a living cell as a result of coincidences. Such a claim, however, is inconsistent with the most unassailable rules of biology.

"Life Comes From Life"

In his book, Darwin never referred to the origin of life. The primitive understanding of science in his time rested on the assumption that living beings had a very simple structure. Since medieval times, spontaneous generation, which asserts that non-living materials came together to form living organisms, had been widely accepted. It was commonly believed that insects came into being from food leftovers, and mice from wheat. Interesting experiments were conducted to prove this theory. Some wheat was placed on a dirty piece of cloth, and it was believed that mice would originate from it after a while.

Similarly, maggots developing in rotting meat was assumed to be evidence of spontaneous generation. However, it was later understood that worms did not appear on meat spontaneously, but were carried there by flies in the form of larvae, invisible to the naked eye.

Even when Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*, the belief that bacteria could come into existence from non-living matter was widely accepted in the world of science.

However, five years after the publication of Darwin's book, Louis Pasteur announced his results after long studies and experiments, that disproved spontaneous generation, a cornerstone of Darwin's theory. In his triumphal lecture at the Sorbonne in 1864, Pasteur said: "Never will the doctrine of spontaneous generation recover from the mortal blow struck by this simple experiment."³⁸

For a long time, advocates of the theory of evolution resisted these findings. However, as the development of science unraveled the complex structure of the cell of a living being, the idea that life could come into being coincidentally faced an even greater impasse.

Inconclusive Efforts In The Twentieth Century

The first evolutionist who took up the subject of the origin of life in the twentieth century was the renowned Russian biologist Alexander Oparin. With various theses he advanced in the 1930s, he tried to prove that a living cell could originate by coincidence. These studies, however, were doomed to failure, and Oparin had to make the following confession:

Unfortunately, however, the problem of the origin of the cell is perhaps the most obscure point in the whole study of the evolution of organisms.³⁹

Evolutionist followers of Oparin tried to carry out experiments to solve this problem. The best known experiment was carried out by the American chemist Stanley Miller in 1953. Combining the gases he alleged to have existed in the primordial Earth's atmosphere in an experiment set-up, and adding energy to the mixture, Miller synthesized several organic molecules (amino acids) present in the structure of proteins.

Barely a few years had passed before it was revealed that this experiment, which was then presented as an important step in the name of evolution, was invalid, for the atmosphere used in the experiment was very different from the real Earth conditions.⁴⁰

After a long silence, Miller confessed that the atmosphere medium he used was unrealistic.⁴¹

All the evolutionists' efforts throughout the twentieth century to explain the origin of life ended in failure. The geochemist Jeffrey Bada, from the San Diego Scripps Institute accepts this fact in an article published in *Earth* magazine in 1998:

Today as we leave the twentieth century, we still face the biggest unsolved problem that we had when we entered the twentieth century: How did life originate on Earth?⁴²

The Complex Structure Of Life

The primary reason why the theory of evolution ended up in such a great impasse regarding the origin of life is that even those living organisms deemed to be the simplest have incredibly complex structures. The cell of a living thing is more complex than all of our man-made technological products. Today, even in the most developed laboratories of the world, a living cell cannot be produced by bringing organic chemicals together.

The conditions required for the formation of a cell are too great in quantity to be explained away by coincidences. The probability of proteins, the building blocks of a cell, being synthesized coincidentally, is 1 in 10950 for an average protein made up of 500 amino acids. In mathematics, a probability smaller than 1 over 1050 is considered to be impossible in practical terms.

The DNA molecule, which is located in the nucleus of a cell and which stores genetic information, is an incredible databank. If the information coded in DNA were written down, it would make a giant library consisting of an estimated 900 volumes of encyclopedias consisting of 500 pages each.

A very interesting dilemma emerges at this point: DNA can replicate itself only with the help of some specialized proteins (enzymes). However, the synthesis of these enzymes can be realized only by the information coded in DNA. As they both depend on each other, they have to exist at the same time for replication. This brings the scenario that life originated by itself to a deadlock. Prof. Leslie Orgel, an evolutionist of repute from the University of San Diego, California, confesses this fact in the September 1994 issue of the *Scientific American* magazine:

It is extremely improbable that proteins and nucleic acids, both of which are structurally complex, arose spontaneously in the same place at the same time. Yet it also seems impossible to have one without the other. And so, at first glance, one might have to conclude that life could never, in fact, have originated by chemical means.⁴³

No doubt, if it is impossible for life to have originated from natural causes, then it has to be accepted that life was "created" in a supernatural way. This fact explicitly invalidates the theory of evolution, whose main purpose is to deny creation.

Imaginary Mechanism Of Evolution

The second important point that negates Darwin's theory is that both concepts put forward by the theory as "evolutionary mechanisms" were understood to have, in reality, no evolutionary power.

Darwin based his evolution allegation entirely on the mechanism of "natural selection." The importance

he placed on this mechanism was evident in the name of his book: *The Origin of Species, By Means of Natural Selection...*

Natural selection holds that those living things that are stronger and more suited to the natural conditions of their habitats will survive in the struggle for life. For example, in a deer herd under the threat of attack by wild animals, those that can run faster will survive. Therefore, the deer herd will be comprised of faster and stronger individuals. However, unquestionably, this mechanism will not cause deer to evolve and transform themselves into another living species, for instance, horses.

Therefore, the mechanism of natural selection has no evolutionary power. Darwin was also aware of this fact and had to state this in his book *The Origin of Species*:

Natural selection can do nothing until favourable individual differences or variations occur.⁴⁴

Lamarck's Impact

So, how could these "favorable variations" occur? Darwin tried to answer this question from the standpoint of the primitive understanding of science at that time. According to the French biologist Chevalier de Lamarck (1744-1829), who lived before Darwin, living creatures passed on the traits they acquired during their lifetime to the next generation. He asserted that these traits, which accumulated from one generation to another, caused new species to be formed. For instance, he claimed that giraffes evolved from antelopes; as they struggled to eat the leaves of high trees, their necks were extended from generation to generation.

Darwin also gave similar examples. In his book *The Origin of Species*, for instance, he said that some bears going into water to find food transformed themselves into whales over time.⁴⁵

However, the laws of inheritance discovered by Gregor Mendel (1822-84) and verified by the science of genetics, which flourished in the twentieth century, utterly demolished the legend that acquired traits were passed on to subsequent generations. Thus, natural selection fell out of favor as an evolutionary mechanism.

Neo-Darwinism And Mutations

In order to find a solution, Darwinists advanced the "Modern Synthetic Theory," or as it is more commonly known, Neo-Darwinism, at the end of the 1930's. Neo-Darwinism added mutations, which are distortions formed in the genes of living beings due to such external factors as radiation or replication errors, as the "cause of favorable variations" in addition to natural mutation.

Today, the model that stands for evolution in the world is Neo-Darwinism. The theory maintains that millions of living beings formed as a result of a process whereby numerous complex organs of these organisms (e.g., ears, eyes, lungs, and wings) underwent "mutations," that is, genetic disorders. Yet, there is an outright scientific fact that totally undermines this theory: Mutations do not cause living beings to develop; on the contrary, they are always harmful.

The reason for this is very simple: DNA has a very complex structure, and random effects can only harm it. The American geneticist B.G. Ranganathan explains this as follows:

First, genuine mutations are very rare in nature. Secondly, most mutations are harmful since they are random, rather than orderly changes in the structure of genes; any random change in a highly ordered system will be for the worse, not for the better. For example, if an earthquake were to shake a highly ordered structure such as a building, there would be a random change in the framework of the building which, in all probability,

would not be an improvement.⁴⁶

Not surprisingly, no mutation example, which is useful, that is, which is observed to develop the genetic code, has been observed so far. All mutations have proved to be harmful. It was understood that mutation, which is presented as an "evolutionary mechanism," is actually a genetic occurrence that harms living things, and leaves them disabled. (The most common effect of mutation on human beings is cancer.) Of course, a destructive mechanism cannot be an "evolutionary mechanism." Natural selection, on the other hand, "can do nothing by itself," as Darwin also accepted. This fact shows us that there is no "evolutionary mechanism" in nature. Since no evolutionary mechanism exists, no such any imaginary process called "evolution" could have taken place.

The Fossil Record: No Sign Of Intermediate Forms

The clearest evidence that the scenario suggested by the theory of evolution did not take place is the fossil record.

According to this theory, every living species has sprung from a predecessor. A previously existing species turned into something else over time and all species have come into being in this way. In other words, this transformation proceeds gradually over millions of years.

Had this been the case, numerous intermediary species should have existed and lived within this long transformation period.

For instance, some half-fish/half-reptiles should have lived in the past which had acquired some reptilian traits in addition to the fish traits they already had. Or there should have existed some reptile-birds, which acquired some bird traits in addition to the reptilian traits they already had. Since these would be in a transitional phase, they should be disabled, defective, crippled living beings. Evolutionists refer to these imaginary creatures, which they believe to have lived in the past, as "transitional forms."

If such animals ever really existed, there should be millions and even billions of them in number and variety. More importantly, the remains of these strange creatures should be present in the fossil record. In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin explained:

If my theory be true, numberless intermediate varieties, linking most closely all of the species of the same group together must assuredly have existed... Consequently, evidence of their former existence could be found only amongst fossil remains.⁴⁷

Darwin's Hopes Shattered

However, although evolutionists have been making strenuous efforts to find fossils since the middle of the nineteenth century all over the world, no transitional forms have yet been uncovered. All of the fossils, contrary to the evolutionists' expectations, show that life appeared on Earth all of a sudden and fully-formed.

One famous British paleontologist, Derek V. Ager, admits this fact, even though he is an evolutionist:

The point emerges that if we examine the fossil record in detail, whether at the level of orders or of species, we find—over and over again—not gradual evolution, but the sudden explosion of one group at the expense of another.⁴⁸

This means that in the fossil record, all living species suddenly emerge as fully formed, without any intermediate forms in between. This is just the opposite of Darwin's assumptions. Also, this is very strong

evidence that all living things are created. The only explanation of a living species emerging suddenly and complete in every detail without any evolutionary ancestor is that it was created. This fact is admitted also by the widely known evolutionist biologist Douglas Futuyma:

Creation and evolution, between them, exhaust the possible explanations for the origin of living things. Organisms either appeared on the Earth fully developed or they did not. If they did not, they must have developed from pre-existing species by some process of modification. If they did appear in a fully developed state, they must indeed have been created by some omnipotent intelligence.⁴⁹

Fossils show that living beings emerged fully developed and in a perfect state on the Earth. That means that "the origin of species," contrary to Darwin's supposition, is not evolution, but creation.

The Tale Of Human Evolution

The subject most often brought up by advocates of the theory of evolution is the subject of the origin of man. The Darwinist claim holds that modern man evolved from ape-like creatures. During this alleged evolutionary process, which is supposed to have started 4-5 million years ago, some "transitional forms" between modern man and his ancestors are supposed to have existed. According to this completely imaginary scenario, four basic "categories" are listed:

1. *Australopithecus*
2. *Homo habilis*
3. *Homo erectus*
4. *Homo sapiens*

Evolutionists call man's so-called first ape-like ancestors *Australopithecus*, which means "South African ape." These living beings are actually nothing but an old ape species that has become extinct. Extensive research done on various *Australopithecus* specimens by two world famous anatomists from England and the USA, namely, Lord Solly Zuckerman and Prof. Charles Oxnard, shows that these apes belonged to an ordinary ape species that became extinct and bore no resemblance to humans.⁵⁰

Evolutionists classify the next stage of human evolution as "homo," that is "man." According to their claim, the living beings in the *Homo* series are more developed than *Australopithecus*. Evolutionists devise a fanciful evolution scheme by arranging different fossils of these creatures in a particular order. This scheme is imaginary because it has never been proved that there is an evolutionary relation between these different classes. Ernst Mayr, one of the twentieth century's most important evolutionists, contends in his book *One Long Argument* that "particularly historical [puzzles] such as the origin of life or of *Homo sapiens*, are extremely difficult and may even resist a final, satisfying explanation."⁵¹

By outlining the link chain as *Australopithecus* > *Homo habilis* > *Homo erectus* > *Homo sapiens*, evolutionists imply that each of these species is one another's ancestor. However, recent findings of paleoanthropologists have revealed that *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, and *Homo erectus* lived at different parts of the world at the same time.⁵²

Moreover, a certain segment of humans classified as *Homo erectus* have lived up until very modern times. *Homo sapiens neandarthalensis* and *Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern man) co-existed in the same region.⁵³

This situation apparently indicates the invalidity of the claim that they are ancestors of one another. A

paleontologist from Harvard University, Stephen Jay Gould, explains this deadlock of the theory of evolution, although he is an evolutionist himself:

What has become of our ladder if there are three coexisting lineages of hominids (*A. africanus*, the robust *australopithecines*, and *H. habilis*), none clearly derived from another? Moreover, none of the three display any evolutionary trends during their tenure on Earth.⁵⁴

Put briefly, the scenario of human evolution, which is "upheld" with the help of various drawings of some "half ape, half human" creatures appearing in the media and course books, that is, frankly, by means of propaganda, is nothing but a tale with no scientific foundation.

Lord Solly Zuckerman, one of the most famous and respected scientists in the U.K., who carried out research on this subject for years and studied *Australopithecus* fossils for 15 years, finally concluded, despite being an evolutionist himself, that there is, in fact, no such family tree branching out from ape-like creatures to man.

Zuckerman also made an interesting "spectrum of science" ranging from those he considered scientific to those he considered unscientific. According to Zuckerman's spectrum, the most "scientific"—that is, depending on concrete data—fields of science are chemistry and physics. After them come the biological sciences and then the social sciences. At the far end of the spectrum, which is the part considered to be most "unscientific," are "extra-sensory perception"—concepts such as telepathy and sixth sense—and finally "human evolution." Zuckerman explains his reasoning:

We then move right off the register of objective truth into those fields of presumed biological science, like extrasensory perception or the interpretation of man's fossil history, where to the faithful [evolutionist] anything is possible—and where the ardent believer [in evolution] is sometimes able to believe several contradictory things at the same time.⁵⁵

The tale of human evolution boils down to nothing but the prejudiced interpretations of some fossils unearthed by certain people, who blindly adhere to their theory.

Darwinian Formula!

Besides all the technical evidence we have dealt with so far, let us now for once, examine what kind of a superstition the evolutionists have with an example so simple as to be understood even by children:

The theory of evolution asserts that life is formed by chance. According to this claim, lifeless and unconscious atoms came together to form the cell and then they somehow formed other living things, including man. Let us think about that. When we bring together the elements that are the building-blocks of life such as carbon, phosphorus, nitrogen and potassium, only a heap is formed. No matter what treatments it undergoes, this atomic heap cannot form even a single living being. If you like, let us formulate an "experiment" on this subject and let us examine on the behalf of evolutionists what they really claim without pronouncing loudly under the name "Darwinian formula":

Let evolutionists put plenty of materials present in the composition of living things such as phosphorus, nitrogen, carbon, oxygen, iron, and magnesium into big barrels. Moreover, let them add in these barrels any material that does not exist under normal conditions, but they think as necessary. Let them add in this mixture as many amino acids—which have no possibility of forming under natural conditions—and as many proteins—a single one of which has a formation probability of 10^{-950} —as they like. Let them expose these mixtures to as

much heat and moisture as they like. Let them stir these with whatever technologically developed device they like. Let them put the foremost scientists beside these barrels. Let these experts wait in turn beside these barrels for billions, and even trillions of years. Let them be free to use all kinds of conditions they believe to be necessary for a human's formation. No matter what they do, they cannot produce from these barrels a human, say a professor that examines his cell structure under the electron microscope. They cannot produce giraffes, lions, bees, canaries, horses, dolphins, roses, orchids, lilies, carnations, bananas, oranges, apples, dates, tomatoes, melons, watermelons, figs, olives, grapes, peaches, peafowls, pheasants, multicoloured butterflies, or millions of other living beings such as these. Indeed, they could not obtain even a single cell of any one of them.

Briefly, unconscious atoms cannot form the cell by coming together. They cannot take a new decision and divide this cell into two, then take other decisions and create the professors who first invent the electron microscope and then examine their own cell structure under that microscope. Matter is an unconscious, lifeless heap, and it comes to life with Allah's superior creation.

The theory of evolution, which claims the opposite, is a total fallacy completely contrary to reason. Thinking even a little bit on the claims of evolutionists discloses this reality, just as in the above example.

Technology In The Eye And The Ear

Another subject that remains unanswered by evolutionary theory is the excellent quality of perception in the eye and the ear.

Before passing on to the subject of the eye, let us briefly answer the question of how we see. Light rays coming from an object fall oppositely on the eye's retina. Here, these light rays are transmitted into electric signals by cells and reach a tiny spot at the back of the brain, the "center of vision." These electric signals are perceived in this center as an image after a series of processes. With this technical background, let us do some thinking.

The brain is insulated from light. That means that its inside is completely dark, and that no light reaches the place where it is located. Thus, the "center of vision" is never touched by light and may even be the darkest place you have ever known. However, you observe a luminous, bright world in this pitch darkness.

The image formed in the eye is so sharp and distinct that even the technology of the twentieth century has not been able to attain it. For instance, look at the book you are reading, your hands with which you are holding it, and then lift your head and look around you. Have you ever seen such a sharp and distinct image as this one at any other place? Even the most developed television screen produced by the greatest television producer in the world cannot provide such a sharp image for you. This is a three-dimensional, colored, and extremely sharp image. For more than 100 years, thousands of engineers have been trying to achieve this sharpness. Factories, huge premises were established, much research has been done, plans and designs have been made for this purpose. Again, look at a TV screen and the book you hold in your hands. You will see that there is a big difference in sharpness and distinction. Moreover, the TV screen shows you a two-dimensional image, whereas with your eyes, you watch a three-dimensional perspective with depth.

For many years, tens of thousands of engineers have tried to make a three-dimensional TV and achieve the vision quality of the eye. Yes, they have made a three-dimensional television system, but it is not possible to watch it without putting on special 3-D glasses; moreover, it is only an artificial three-dimension. The background is more blurred, the foreground appears like a paper setting. Never has it been possible to produce a

sharp and distinct vision like that of the eye. In both the camera and the television, there is a loss of image quality.

Evolutionists claim that the mechanism producing this sharp and distinct image has been formed by chance. Now, if somebody told you that the television in your room was formed as a result of chance, that all of its atoms just happened to come together and make up this device that produces an image, what would you think? How can atoms do what thousands of people cannot?

If a device producing a more primitive image than the eye could not have been formed by chance, then it is very evident that the eye and the image seen by the eye could not have been formed by chance. The same situation applies to the ear. The outer ear picks up the available sounds by the auricle and directs them to the middle ear, the middle ear transmits the sound vibrations by intensifying them, and the inner ear sends these vibrations to the brain by translating them into electric signals. Just as with the eye, the act of hearing finalizes in the center of hearing in the brain.

The situation in the eye is also true for the ear. That is, the brain is insulated from sound just as it is from light. It does not let any sound in. Therefore, no matter how noisy is the outside, the inside of the brain is completely silent. Nevertheless, the sharpest sounds are perceived in the brain. In your completely silent brain, you listen to symphonies, and hear all of the noises in a crowded place. However, were the sound level in your brain was measured by a precise device at that moment, complete silence would be found to be prevailing there.

As is the case with imagery, decades of effort have been spent in trying to generate and reproduce sound that is faithful to the original. The results of these efforts are sound recorders, high-fidelity systems, and systems for sensing sound. Despite all of this technology and the thousands of engineers and experts who have been working on this endeavor, no sound has yet been obtained that has the same sharpness and clarity as the sound perceived by the ear. Think of the highest-quality hi-fi systems produced by the largest company in the music industry. Even in these devices, when sound is recorded some of it is lost; or when you turn on a hi-fi you always hear a hissing sound before the music starts. However, the sounds that are the products of the human body's technology are extremely sharp and clear. A human ear never perceives a sound accompanied by a hissing sound or with atmospherics as does a hi-fi; rather, it perceives sound exactly as it is, sharp and clear. This is the way it has been since the creation of man.

So far, no man-made visual or recording apparatus has been as sensitive and successful in perceiving sensory data as are the eye and the ear. However, as far as seeing and hearing are concerned, a far greater truth lies beyond all this.

To Whom Does The Consciousness That Sees And Hears Within The Brain Belong?

Who watches an alluring world in the brain, listens to symphonies and the twittering of birds, and smells the rose?

The stimulations coming from a person's eyes, ears, and nose travel to the brain as electro-chemical nerve impulses. In biology, physiology, and biochemistry books, you can find many details about how this image forms in the brain. However, you will never come across the most important fact: Who perceives these electro-chemical nerve impulses as images, sounds, odors, and sensory events in the brain? There is a consciousness in the brain that perceives all this without feeling any need for an eye, an ear, and a nose. To

whom does this consciousness belong? Of course it does not belong to the nerves, the fat layer, and neurons comprising the brain. This is why Darwinist-materialists, who believe that everything is comprised of matter, cannot answer these questions.

For this consciousness is the spirit created by Allah, which needs neither the eye to watch the images nor the ear to hear the sounds. Furthermore, it does not need the brain to think.

Everyone who reads this explicit and scientific fact should ponder on Almighty Allah, and fear and seek refuge in Him, for He squeezes the entire universe in a pitch-dark place of a few cubic centimeters in a three-dimensional, colored, shadowy, and luminous form.

A Materialist Faith

The information we have presented so far shows us that the theory of evolution is a incompatible with scientific findings. The theory's claim regarding the origin of life is inconsistent with science, the evolutionary mechanisms it proposes have no evolutionary power, and fossils demonstrate that the required intermediate forms have never existed. So, it certainly follows that the theory of evolution should be pushed aside as an unscientific idea. This is how many ideas, such as the Earth-centered universe model, have been taken out of the agenda of science throughout history.

However, the theory of evolution is kept on the agenda of science. Some people even try to represent criticisms directed against it as an "attack on science." Why?

The reason is that this theory is an indispensable dogmatic belief for some circles. These circles are blindly devoted to materialist philosophy and adopt Darwinism because it is the only materialist explanation that can be put forward to explain the workings of nature.

Interestingly enough, they also confess this fact from time to time. A well-known geneticist and an outspoken evolutionist, Richard C. Lewontin from Harvard University, confesses that he is "first and foremost a materialist and then a scientist":

It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, so we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.⁵⁶

These are explicit statements that Darwinism is a dogma kept alive just for the sake of adherence to materialism. This dogma maintains that there is no being save matter. Therefore, it argues that inanimate, unconscious matter created life. It insists that millions of different living species (e.g., birds, fish, giraffes, tigers, insects, trees, flowers, whales, and human beings) originated as a result of the interactions between matter such as pouring rain, lightning flashes, and so on, out of inanimate matter. This is a precept contrary both to reason and science. Yet Darwinists continue to defend it just so as "not to allow a Divine Foot in the door."

Anyone who does not look at the origin of living beings with a materialist prejudice will see this evident truth: All living beings are works of a Creator, Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise, and All-Knowing. This Creator is Allah, Who created the whole universe from non-existence, designed it in the most perfect form, and fashioned all living beings.

The Theory Of Evolution Is The Most Potent Spell In The World

Anyone free of prejudice and the influence of any particular ideology, who uses only his or her reason and logic, will clearly understand that belief in the theory of evolution, which brings to mind the superstitions of societies with no knowledge of science or civilization, is quite impossible.

As explained above, those who believe in the theory of evolution think that a few atoms and molecules thrown into a huge vat could produce thinking, reasoning professors and university students; such scientists as Einstein and Galileo; such artists as Humphrey Bogart, Frank Sinatra and Luciano Pavarotti; as well as antelopes, lemon trees, and carnations. Moreover, as the scientists and professors who believe in this nonsense are educated people, it is quite justifiable to speak of this theory as "the most potent spell in history." Never before has any other belief or idea so taken away peoples' powers of reason, refused to allow them to think intelligently and logically and hidden the truth from them as if they had been blindfolded. This is an even worse and unbelievable blindness than the Egyptians worshipping the Sun God Ra, totem worship in some parts of Africa, the people of Saba worshipping the Sun, the tribe of Prophet Ibrahim (saas) worshipping idols they had made with their own hands, or the people of the Prophet Musa (saas) worshipping the Golden Calf.

In fact, Allah has pointed to this lack of reason in the Qur'an. In many verse, He reveals in many verses that some peoples' minds will be closed and that they will be powerless to see the truth. Some of these verses are as follows:

As for those who do not believe, it makes no difference to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. Allah has sealed up their hearts and hearing and over their eyes is a blindfold. They will have a terrible punishment. (Surat al-Baqara, 6-7)

... They have hearts with which they do not understand. They have eyes with which they do not see. They have ears with which they do not hear. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware. (Surat al-A'raf, 179)

Even if We opened up to them a door into heaven, and they spent the day ascending through it, they would only say: "Our eyesight is befuddled! Or rather we have been put under a spell!" (Surat al-Hijr, 14-15)

Words cannot express just how astonishing it is that this spell should hold such a wide community in thrall, keep people from the truth, and not be broken for 150 years. It is understandable that one or a few people might believe in impossible scenarios and claims full of stupidity and illogicality. However, "magic" is the only possible explanation for people from all over the world believing that unconscious and lifeless atoms suddenly decided to come together and form a universe that functions with a flawless system of organization, discipline, reason, and consciousness; a planet named Earth with all of its features so perfectly suited to life; and living things full of countless complex systems.

In fact, the Qur'an relates the incident of Prophet Musa and Pharaoh to show that some people who support atheistic philosophies actually influence others by magic. When Pharaoh was told about the true religion, he told Prophet Musa to meet with his own magicians. When Musa did so, he told them to demonstrate

their abilities first. The verses continue:

He said: "You throw." And when they threw, they cast a spell on the people's eyes and caused them to feel great fear of them. They produced an extremely powerful magic. (Surat al-A'raf, 116)

As we have seen, Pharaoh's magicians were able to deceive everyone, apart from Musa and those who believed in him. However, his evidence broke the spell, or "swallowed up what they had forged," as the verse puts it.

We revealed to Musa, "Throw down your staff." And it immediately swallowed up what they had forged. So the Truth took place and what they did was shown to be false. (Surat al-A'raf, 117-118)

As we can see, when people realized that a spell had been cast upon them and that what they saw was just an illusion, Pharaoh's magicians lost all credibility. In the present day too, unless those who, under the influence of a similar spell, believe in these ridiculous claims under their scientific disguise and spend their lives defending them, abandon their superstitious beliefs, they also will be humiliated when the full truth emerges and the spell is broken. In fact, world-renowned British writer and philosopher Malcolm Muggeridge also stated this:

I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially the extent to which it's been applied, will be one of the great jokes in the history books in the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious an hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity that it has.⁵⁷

That future is not far off: On the contrary, people will soon see that "chance" is not a deity, and will look back on the theory of evolution as the worst deceit and the most terrible spell in the world. That spell is already rapidly beginning to be lifted from the shoulders of people all over the world. Many people who see its true face are wondering with amazement how they could ever have been taken in by it.

- 1 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Books, The Rays 11, The Fruits of Belief
- 2 The Rays 11, The Fruits of Belief, A Summary of the Eighth Topic
- 3 The Flashes 26, Fifteenth Hope
- 4 The Rays 14, Letters
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 The Rays 13
- 7 The Flashes 26
- 8 The Rays 14, Letters
- 9 The Flashes 26
- 10 The Rays 14, Letters
- 11 The Rays 13
- 12 Ibid
- 13 The Words 13
- 14 The Rays 14, Letters
- 15 The Words 13, Three Letters
- 16 The Rays 13
- 17 The Flashes 26
- 18 The Flashes 26
- 19 The Words 13, The Second Station
- 20 The Flashes 26
- 21 The Flashes 26
- 22 The Letters 13
- 23 The Letters 13
- 24 The Flashes 26
- 25 The Rays 13
- 26 The Words, Three Letters
- 27 The Rays 11
- 28 Necip Fazil Kisakurek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumlari* (Oppressed Men of Religion of the Last Era), p. 223
- 29 Necmettin Sahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, p. 298
- 30 Sahiner, *Son Sahitler* (Last Witnesses), vol. 1, pp. 82-83
- 31 The Flashes 26
- 32 Sahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Bediuzzaman Said Nursi As We Do Not Know Him), pp. 89-95
- 33 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Emirdag Letter
- 34 Sahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflariyla Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Said Nursi As We Do Not Know Him), p. 346
- 35 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Tarihce-i Hayat* (History of Life), p. 451
- 36 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Kastamonu Letter
- 37 The Flashes 26

38 Sidney Fox, Klaus Dose, *Molecular Evolution and The Origin of Life*, W.H. Freeman and Company, San Francisco, 1972, p. 4.

39 Alexander I. Oparin, *Origin of Life*

BACK COVER

“... And he languished in prison for a number of years more.” (Surah Yusuf, 42). According to an exegesis of this verse, Joseph (Peace be upon him) is the patron of prisoners, and prison is a sort of School of Joseph. (Madrassa-i Yusufiya)

This interpretation was offered by one of the greatest Islamic scholars of the 20th century, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, who devoted much of his life to the teaching of the morality of the Qur'an, and because of that earned the animosity of certain circles. Ultimately, he spent 30 years of his life in prison and exile.

The reason for these schools to be referred to as the School of Yusuf, is that, as the Qur'an reveals, Yusuf (as), known for his faith and good character, spent many years of his life in them, despite his innocence. Despite this adversity, he continued to teach Islam to fellow prisoners, telling them of the existence of Allah and proper morality. And he did not complain at any time during his term.

Throughout history, believers, who were imprisoned as a consequence of slander, or suffered some other hardship, demonstrated that they would never compromise their morality, thus following the example set by Yusuf (as).

Believers, who are punished with imprisonment, are considered by others, who are deficient in their understanding, to be confined. In reality, however, they have an opportunity to concentrate on their spiritual development, to deepen their insight. Therefore, those who seek to harm Muslims, and to inhibit their efforts in the service of the faith, in reality, only end up helping the Muslims in the earning of a great reward.